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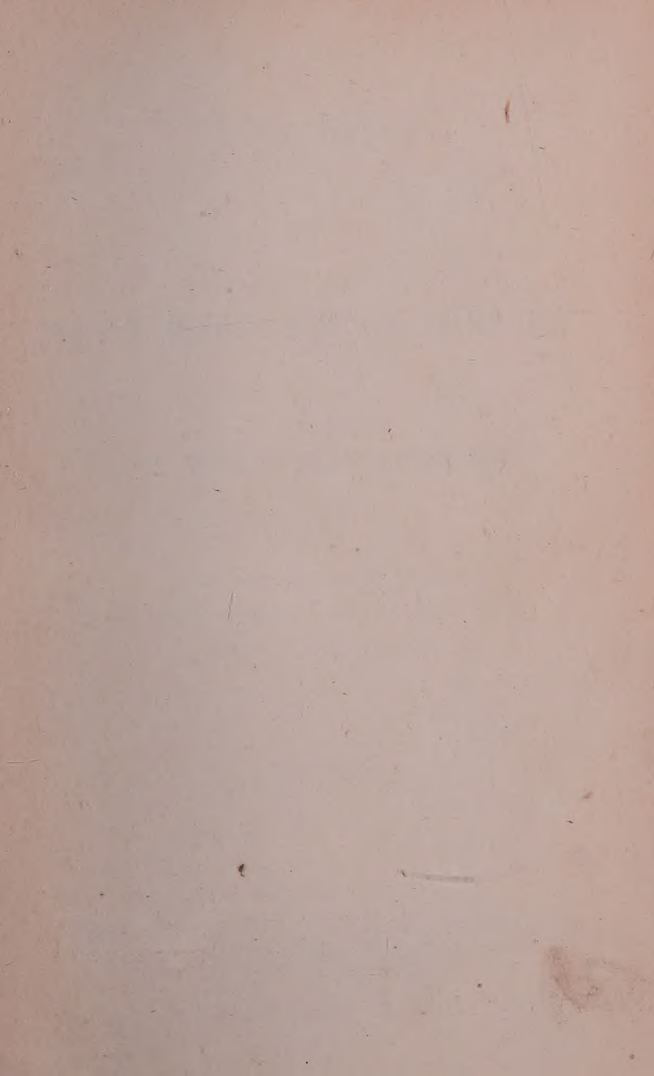
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# THE LIFE

OF

## SAINT MARGARET OF CORTONA.

BY THE

CANON ANTHONY FRANCIS GIOVAGNOLI.

WITH THE APPROBATION OF THE

RT. REV. JOHN N. NEUMANN, D. D.,

BISHOP OF PHILADELPHIA.

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THIS LIFE OF  
THE ILLUSTRIOUS PATRONESS OF THE  
SERAPHIC ORDER  
IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED  
TO THE  
VERY REV. PAMFILO DA MAGLIANO,  
PROVINCIAL OF THE RECOLLECTS  
OF THE ORDER OF SAINT FRANCIS  
IN THE UNITED STATES.

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## PREFACE.



THE life of Saint Margaret, that heroic model of penance, which is here presented to the English reader, received a Roman approbation in 1751, having been carefully examined by command of the Master of the Sacred Palace. The Carmelite Father Aloysius Mary of Jesus thus speaks: "In obedience to the commands of the Most Rev. Father Augustine Orsi, Master of the Sacred Apostolic Palace, I have read with attention and pleasure the book entitled, 'Life of Saint Margaret of Cortona, by Canon Anthony Francis Giovagnoli,' and found it worthy of being reprinted here at Rome, and most seasonable,—to sinners, as a strong inducement to be converted and rise to a better life,—to the just, as a salutary instruction, teaching them at what pace they should press on and advance in that more excellent way whereof the Apostle speaks in his first epistle to the Corinthians."

In order to render it more pleasing to the pious reader, we have added the introduction of a French life by the Abbé Bergier.



## INTRODUCTION.



THE illustrious penitent whose history we undertake, has been till now almost unknown among us. The moment has, we think, come to draw her from this unjust oblivion, and to place in broad day before the eyes of all, the wonders of her charity and repentance. Never, we believe, have minds and hearts been more favorably disposed to understand and relish such examples, and to reap the fruits of grace and salvation which they contain. In our day more than in any other period, and among ourselves more than among all others, an immense need of interior restoration, public reparation, expiation of every kind, presses and agitates Christian souls. There is, in fact, so much to expiate, so much to restore in our age, when scandals abound, when blasphemy stalks proudly, when forgetfulness of God and contempt for his holy name seem to pass all limits. Fervent souls see it, feel it, are afflicted, and seek to remedy it. Hence the extraordinary and unheard of efforts made to satisfy divine justice; hence under a thousand names, and a thou-

and different forms, those salutary organizations instituted in various countries for reparation for blasphemy, for the sanctification of Sunday, which the faithful so eagerly and so spontaneously welcome, and which the Church blesses with so much love and hope.

This need of satisfaction and restoration is general among us. Pure virginal souls are no longer satisfied to keep aloof from the world's corruption, they also wish to pray, mourn, immolate themselves for others, make reparation to the Almighty, and present themselves before his mercy as victims of expiation. Those whom sin has uncrowned and blighted, but who are aspiring to return to God, aspire also to restore themselves completely in his eyes, to recover the virginal splendor of their pristine purity. But, alas! among these many hesitate, despair, halt in the way of expiation. If, at least, they could hope to reach the point from which they had fallen, re-enter that group of virgins who follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, and from which they have been banished: if they could restore to their crown that beautiful flower of virginity which they have allowed to wither,—sacrifice would cost less! But is complete reparation possible here? Can what no longer exists revive? This cruel doubt fills them with interior

desolation and bitterness, and crushes their strength. To these faint-hearted and unhappy souls we offer a consolation, a hope: *The Life of Saint Margaret of Cortona*. To them we say: Take and read; here is a penitent whose whole life is a solemn protestation against the doubt which troubles and arrests you, a proof that virginity may be restored before God, that it is susceptible of an unspeakable reparation.

On such a matter we may be permitted to give the opinion of a pious and learned bishop, Monseigneur Luquet, Bishop of Hesebon. His words, moreover, better than aught we can say, will show our readers the sublime and privileged mission which Divine Providence seems to assign among us to the illustrious penitent whose life now engages our consideration. The learned bishop was in the neighborhood of Rome, when to some questions on the works of reparation going on in France, and which inspire the faithful with so much joy and confidence, he replied in these terms: "I have a special motive in addressing you to-day. I feel impelled to impart to you the movement of special devotion which leads some souls to invoke a Saint who may well be classed among the chief patrons of reparation: I mean the dear penitent, Saint Margaret of Cortona. She is almost unknown in France, I be-

lieve: this is, methinks, a motive the more to impart to you what I have to say. As you know, she began her youth by profligacy; the sad death of him who had turned her from God brought her back, and she afterwards, aided by grace, undertook a penitent life, in which love was her sole and overflowing joy. Our Lord deigned to favor her with his private converse, and at first gave her no other name but *poverella* (poor thing). Happy at first, she at last saddened to receive no other name from her Beloved, and she humbly complained. She was long kept in this lot, already most sweet and consoling. At last, she heard herself called *daughter*, and her joy was great. Not long after Our Lord called her by a still dearer title: *spouse*. Her longings were now crowned, there was naught more to desire; but Our Lord, who is infinite, wished to console her beyond all hopes, and he, who is truth itself, called Margaret, the poor companion of his virgins, consequently his virgin. She could not believe it, she was alarmed, thinking doubtless that the devil wished to deceive her. He, who is the resurrection and the life, re-assured and confirmed her, promising to place her in his kingdom in the rank of virgins, because all is possible to love. Since the stigmas of Saint Francis, this exterior gift, before unknown in the Church, has



been several times renewed. Nor, may we hope, will the grace of Saint Margaret be limited to her. It is one of the treasures of the Church since the Saint received it, and cannot souls draw efficaciously by faith from that treasury? Can we not in this regard hope without limit, hope everything at this moment when the Immaculate Conception of Mary seems about to be given as a dogma of faith? This mystery of our Mother is the mystery of innocence. She who introduced true virginity into the world, first conscious how agreeable it is to God, pours forth, we cannot doubt it, torrents of innocence for the truly faithful. Now what is impossible to man is possible to God. This dear Saint Margaret has already inspired great hopes, true conversions; we know many souls who aspire to glorify the Lamb in that legion of resuscitated virgins, in order not to leave void the gift of God. They hope through Mary, immaculate in her conception, that 'this hope will not confound them.' I am interiorly moved to think as they do. Pray then, pray for these poor souls, so that they may always hope against all hope. If you know any others whom the Holy Ghost invites to hope, by putting themselves in the rank of poor sinners, the outcasts of the world, tell them to come: the souls of whom I speak ask nothing for themselves, that

they do not equally solicit for the others. This is what, in this great triumph of Mary, my heart has longed to confide to yours, that in its due time, if this impulse comes from the Holy Ghost, as I think it does, you may impart it to others."

These consoling ideas, we will add, are not new in the Church. In the lives of the Fathers of the Desert we find an incident cited by Rodriguez, which wonderfully corroborates the same thought. It is the history of Saint Thais. Thais embraced a life of great austerity: at the end of three years the holy anchorite who had recalled her to God, wished to know whether her penance had been sufficient; "he consulted Saint Anthony whether God had forgiven her her sins; the Saint called his monks and bade them all watch and pray the coming night, each by himself, in order to obtain of God some declaration of what Paphnutius had come to seek. While all then were in prayer, Paul, who was the greatest of the disciples of Saint Anthony, saw in heaven a bed adorned with precious curtains and ornaments, guarded by four virgins. When Paul saw so rich a thing, he thought and said within himself, 'This is a reward and a favor laid up for no other than our father Saint Anthony:' but while thus in thought a voice came down to him from heaven, saying: 'This bed is not for

thy father Anthony, but for Thais the sinner.' And a fortnight after God was pleased to call her to enjoy that glory and heavenly bridal."\* Thus like Margaret of Cortona, the sinful Thais had, by penance, completely restored herself in the eyes of her heavenly Bridegroom; like Margaret, heaven had declared her worthy to be called Virgin of the Lamb, worthy of the unspeakable honor laid up for virginity alone; like Margaret in fine, Thais was a *resuscitated virgin*.

A pious and eloquent Doctor, Saint Peter Chrysologus, makes the same observation with regard to Magdalen, the first and most celebrated penitent in the Church. "Do you see this woman? When she came to the feet of Jesus, she was a sinner, impure, accursed of God and man; when she departed, she was pure, holy, radiant with the glory of virgins. Her crimes and her scandals had made her a dishonored, despicable creature; her lively repentance and her love wrought such a change in her, that she merited to bear the very name of the purest of virgins, that of Mary. *Venit mulier, sed rediit Maria.*"†

Saint Paul himself had no other desire, no other hope for his beloved Christians of Corinth.

\* Rodriguez, Christian Perfection, Part i. Treat. v. ch. 19.

† Serm. 77.

Some of them had fallen into monstrous crimes, into the sins which he himself forbids us to name. The holy Apostle is saddened and alarmed when he thinks that several perhaps have not done penance. As to those who fulfilled the penance he imposed, he rejoices and consoles them, and to convince them that they had recovered a perfect innocence: "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." Watch then, he adds, "for I fear lest, as the serpent seduced Eve by his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted and fall from the simplicity that is in Christ."\* "Where sin has abounded, doth grace superabound," says the same Apostle. What right then has man's distrust to set restrictions and limits to the almighty efficacy of that divine grace, and the infinite, superabundant merits of the redeeming blood? What sin could corrupt and wither in a virgin soul, cannot grace from above, to crown the heroic love of the repentant soul, invest with new life and splendor? Yes, as it falls on an impure and sinful, but now penitent and sufficiently disposed soul, the thrice pure blood of the Lamb may purify it, efface the slightest stains, and restore to its primitive

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\* 2 Cor. xi. 2, 3.

rights all the virginal freshness of its innocence, and all the effulgence of its first purity. From this sacred laver, as from a new baptism, it will come forth all beautiful, pure, regenerated, transformed, radiant with new youth and life. What was lost has been found again, what was dead lives again. It is a "resuscitated virgin."

But how can this be done? Job of old addressed the Lord a similar question. "Who can make pure what is conceived in an impure source?" "Thou alone, O my God," he adds. God can, God does daily by the grace of baptism. And now, how can he after baptism render virginal, the soul which has ceased to be so? "Thou alone canst do it," we will repeat with the holy patriarch. It is the secret of an heroic penance and of a sublime love, it is the mysterious fruit of the grace and blood of the spotless Lamb!

A man of learning and piety, hearing these thoughts of reparation and spiritual resurrection proposed, cried out in his desire to see them diffused still more amongst the faithful: "This can bear torrents of souls to heaven." May the perusal of the book, which we offer the public, contribute in some measure to realize this desire of a fervent soul! May our good and dear Saint Margaret of Cortona, become the protectress and

guardian of the expiatory works, called up in our day to divert so many scourges, repair so many ruins! Following her example, and under her auspices, may the number of resuscitated virgins increase and multiply among us, to increase in heaven the radiant band that the Lamb gathers around him, amid the angels! This is our most ardent desire, our only ambition.

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# LIFE OF ST MARGARET OF CORTONA.

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## BOOK I.

### CHAPTER I.

#### MARGARET'S BIRTH AND EARLY YEARS.

THE devout reader may appreciate the special prerogatives and eminent merits of the illustrious heroine of Cortona, and most exemplary penitent of the whole Church, ST. MARGARET, from this undoubted testimony given by the very lips of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the loving colloquies, familiarly and all but habitually held during the many years of her most penitent life. That Divine and loving Lord soon discarded the word, "My poor one," with which he first addressed her, and not satisfied with that of *daughter*, soon after added, styled her repeatedly, "*My soul, my elect spouse, fore-chosen of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Precious throne, and most beautiful Temple of the whole Trinity*; and at last: '*My mother, so dear to me, that there shall be no creature unto whom I will not show special mercy, if thou intercedest for him.*'" Titles that seemed

to the humble Saint too unsuited to one whose life had been so guilty, but the benignant Lord confirmed it with these no less exalted expressions: "I have made thee a marvellous light, to enlighten those that sit in the shadows of sin. I have made thee a stupendous heat, fit to inflame the most frozen hearts. Thou shalt be a light to thy own Brethren. I have set thee in the desert of the world, like a voice resounding from a lofty spot, like a sounding trumpet calling all to my love: I have ordained thee the Mother and the mirror of sinners, that leaving vice they may expect pardon, thou shalt be my fisher of most stubborn souls: thou shalt be the gate of their eternal salvation."

Such may she be to me, and to all who read this present life, carefully compiled from the full and authentic accounts, passing lightly over such incidents as furnished little or no matter for real compunction, which alone I seek to produce in my readers.

Laviano, a little hamlet, (a feud of the Perugine family Oddi,) not far distant from Cortona, was the birth place of Margaret. Her parents were poor, but respected peasants. The month and day of her birth are matters of doubt, but it was certainly in the year 1247, when not without a special design of Providence, she was re-

generated in the sacred Font, not in her own, but in a neighbouring hamlet, Puzzuolo, in the church of the Apostle St. Peter, a presage of heaven, that the child was one day to imitate the fervor of that first model of Christian penitence.

Margaret was of a lively disposition, and of pleasing and handsome address: her good mother, who loved her tenderly, accordingly educated her carefully. Of this two-fold advantage of a mother's caresses, and a mother's vigilance, Margaret was deprived at the very moment when she was best able to appreciate them; for when the little girl was only about seven years old, her beloved mother died. Her father ere long married again, a most unfortunate step for Margaret. Accustomed to her mother's affectionate ways, she could not adapt herself to her stepmother's harshness; the latter accordingly could by no effort make her obedient to her commands, or yielding to her suggestions, still less respectful to her correction. Hence the stepmother deepened in her dislike of her stepdaughter, and the latter every day spurned more scornfully her stepmother's suggestions; so that, as every hour seemed an age to get entirely out of her hands, she thought of nothing but getting married. But as her father was not rich, it was not his interest

to have her marry so soon ; for in the meantime he profited by the domestic labours of his daughter, and he would be hampered by the payment of the necessary dowry at the marriage. Nevertheless, the incautious parent allowed her to dress in a style of vanity, that ill suited their condition as poor peasants, and to flirt freely with all the gallants who approached her. Her light manners, her gay dress, her easy and winning ways, drew many around her. Beyond all the other gallants, easily prevailed the unchecked offers of a young and wealthy noble of Monte Pulciano, whence he often came to amuse himself in a villa near Laviano. We cannot accurately decide from the scanty memoirs of the time, whether he asked her of her parents as a servant, or carried her off without their knowledge ; but it is certain that Margaret went to reside in the gentleman's house at Monte Pulciano, where she lived so sumptuously, and dressed so extravagantly, that every one could see that she was anything but a servant in his house. Their dissolute connection became more evident by Margaret's evident pregnancy, and ere long she gave birth to a handsome boy : who, unhappy in his shameful origin, through the incontinency of his illegitimate parents, became fortunate in the glorious end which his mother's repentant

and contrite tears procured for him in the order of St. Francis.

And to this repentance the Almighty in his goodness disposed her, by keeping alive in her heart a most tender compassion for the poor, and by exciting in her a devout relish for retired and solitary spots, where she was wont to bewail her faults; of which she often felt such acute fear, that she would burst forth into bitter lamentations, and declare herself unworthy of the ordinary salutations made by those who knew her, when they met; so even then she frequently presaged her conversion, for she was often, in reply to those who chid her for her unbridled vanity and scandalous life, heard to exclaim: "You will see, yes, you will see a time, when I shall be a Saint: and you shall see pilgrims with their staffs come to visit my tomb.

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## CHAPTER II.

### HER CONVERSION.

GOD in his mercy hastened the coming of that happy time, by a severe blow of his terrible justice, interested in bringing salvation to Margaret, and

consequently in putting an end to that career of sinful love, in which she had spent almost nine years, down to the age of twenty-seven. Her wretched paramour was suddenly cut off. Having gone out one day alone to the country, to investigate the boundary of one of his demesnes, in the territory of Petrogniano, a feud of the Passerini, noble knights of Cortona, he was furiously assailed by some enemies, who with clubs and swords, cruelly murdered him, and conscious of their crime, dragged the body under some oak trees, where they rudely buried it under stones and brush. Evening came on, and as the gentleman did not appear, Margaret's heart was greatly agitated. Her trouble and solicitude greatly increased, when the next day passed without his appearance; then alarmed, and full of anxiety, she dispatched the servants after him, placing herself meanwhile to look out from a window. At last, and almost at the close of the day, she beheld approaching the house her lover's faithful dog. Margaret rejoiced, considering this a sure sign of his speedy approach, and full of delight, ran down to open the door to admit him. The animal came in, but far differently from its usual manner: instead of the bounds and sportive ways, with which it usually frisked around her, it began to whine and howl piteously, and

at last fell fainting at her feet: such a display of sadness in the dog rekindled fear in Margaret's heart, the more so, as no sign of her master could be discerned. Yet flattering herself that the faintness of the dog was caused merely by hunger, she gave him plenteous food: this the dog devoured with avidity equal to its exhaustion; and that must have been great, as the poor brute had not tasted a morsel from the time of the murder of its master, by whose ill buried body it had posted itself for two days, to moan and guard it. When food had appeased its hunger, its grief was unabated, and with fresh strength, it renewed its piteous whinings as before; and from time to time, taking hold of Margaret's skirt, it endeavored to draw her along. She observed attentively, and wavering between hope and fear, resolved to obey it, and seek under its guidance her lost one.

She found him, but not as she sought him; for when about a mile from Monte Pulciano, the dog left the beaten road, led her beneath the funereal oaks, where, digging away the earth with its paws as best it could, it finally laid bare a part of that buried body. Margaret ran to uncover the rest with her hands, and at the cruel sight was horrified, her blood congealed and she fainted. Reviving by the very paroxysm of her grief, it

is easy to conceive what torrents of tears she shed over those cold, mangled limbs; what invectives she uttered against his cruel murderers who deprived her of her only stay, casting her back into her native poverty, the more sensible and bitter now that she had so long been living as a lady. But in this very anguish God awaited her, to disengage her from the vanity of the deceitful world, and to turn her love to beauties that do not fade, pleasures that have no bitterness.

By the sight of that decaying corpse God raised her mind to understand the brevity of this life, and the even greater deformity of her soul stained with mortal sin, her imminent peril of being plunged into hell herself as her mad lover had been. The heavenly light of the Holy Ghost set all this before her so clearly, as immediately to transform her from a great sinner into a great penitent. "Ut cognovit, resipuit Seraphici Ordinis Magdalena: dimissa sunt ei peccata multa, quia dilexit multum;" as Holy Church sings of her.\* Weeping now rather over her past sins than her present misfortune, and inflamed with a deadly hatred against her own offences, she re-

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\* As soon as she saw it, she repented, this Magdalen of the Franciscan Order. Many sins were forgiven her, because she loved much.



turned that same day to Monte Pulciano, resolved to lead a far different life from what she had hitherto. She accordingly at once laid aside all vain finery, attired herself in a poor black dress ; and to all those who still persisted in styling her Signora, she would answer : “ Ah ! call me only *sinner*, it is the only name my scandalous life deserves.”

To blot out all recollection of this, she resolved to retire from Monte Pulciano. Hence, having arranged the affairs of the stricken house as quickly as possible and as well as she could, she resigned all faithfully to the relatives of the late nobleman ; and taking the road to her village, left that city, leading by the hand her little son, fruit of her love, but testimony of her shame, and no small part of her interior anxiety. “ Oh, to how many does tribulation give understanding ! How many has a great calamity wrested from vice, and devoted to a life of piety !” says the venerable Cardinal Bellarmine, with whose seasonable words we close this chapter.

## CHAPTER III.

## HER RETURN HOME.

EVERY step that Margaret took towards Laviano, cost her a great effort of heroic virtue, so great were the obstacles raised by the devil, the world, and the flesh. Knowing the deep stain cast on her family by her public concubinage, and remembering too her step-mother's harsh aversion, she could not blind herself as to the welcome that she would receive at home: she felt in anticipation her deep blushes on appearing before her parents and hearing their just rebuke. All these in mere imagination chilled the life's blood of the wretched woman, and oppressed her breaking heart with horror; the more so as the devil, ever alert at any opportunity of her bursting his toils, mightily increased these dark apprehensions; and at the same time by interior flattering and temptation lured her back to the ease which she had enjoyed, the pleasures which she had tasted; as to secure them would need only her giving herself to some other noble lover, whom she could easily gain anywhere by her charms and beauty. In this fierce conflict of various and powerful temptations, the new convert and inexperienced combatant suffered a deadly

agony. She triumphed at last by that just fear already conceived of an outraged God, an eternal hell, a sudden death: lights which God in his mercy kept brightly before her, more powerful than the shades of deceit. Strengthened by these reflections, and urged by these most efficacious stimuli, she triumphantly pursued her homeward way as she had started.

On arriving, she proceeded at once to her father's house, fell at the feet of her amazed and indignant parent, and by lamentation and entreaty at last so moved him that he was about to receive her in his house, when the enraged step-mother came up like a raving fury, pushed her violently from the door, and turning to her indulgent husband declared that if that infamous jade set foot in the house, she would leave it for ever. Poor father! wretched daughter! the tears that streamed from her eyes, his weighty arguments, at last calmed the furious woman a little, and she consented to receive her. But she soon repented it. And although Margaret suffered in silence her constant reproaches, obeyed her as a servant, served her as a slave; nevertheless, inflamed with increasing rage, she gained her husband over, and both with one accord, drove her pitilessly forth with a harsh order never to dare again enter their doors

All Margaret's tears, her many entreaties, her promises of every kind, could not arrest the fatal blow ; she was forced to go, and set out with her little son, who wept bitterly with his disconsolate mother. Not knowing whither to turn her steps, she sat down in a neighboring garden under a fig tree, to relieve her breaking heart with tears.

At this favorable moment the infernal serpent hastened to renew his assaults, suggesting with subtle art, that to avoid perishing with hunger, and seeing her child perish too, she would have to go back to Monte Pulciano, and return to her former mode of life. The guilt and shame of her new sins would, the tempter whispered, lie at the door of those who had driven her to the extreme necessity. The temptation was a violent one, but at the instant, she with a fervent heart implored aid from God, her only help, and obtained it promptly. He suggested to her in a manner more sensible than ordinary inspirations, that she should at once proceed to Cortona, and there put herself under the care and direction of the charitable and holy sons of SAINT FRANCIS. Margaret obediently embraced the inspiration at once, and although the distance was over eight miles, and her strength well nigh spent, more by the bitter anguish of her heart than by the want of sufficient food, which for many a day she had

not tasted, yet taking up her languid child, she turned courageously towards Cortona. In such noble examples of heroic magnanimity and constancy, every repentant sinner should behold his model, "and having followed the sinner, follow too the penitent."

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## CHAPTER IV.

### HER ARRIVAL AT CORTONA.

NEVER for ancient lordly Cortona dawned there a happier day, never struck there an hour more fortunate, than that in which the new penitent, the great Margaret, set her foot within its noble walls, never to leave them! By her example, she was to reform the people, avert disaster from it by prayer, dispel misfortune by prodigies, glorify its name by the fame of her stupendous life, her blessed death, and finally, by her special protection, obtaining for them from God every prosperity. And worthy of Margaret's most tender love did the Cortonese show themselves, from the moment that she entered their walls. For as she entered, the Countesses Raneria and Maneria, equally eminent for illustrious

birth, and the more splendid gifts of Christian virtues, meeting Margaret, addressed her kindly, and imagining her condition, showed themselves ready to meet her wants.

This offer, regarded by Margaret as a loving ray of God's providence, greatly encouraged her, and redoubled her confidence in him; and with tears and sobs of true contrition, she succinctly related the whole course of her sad misfortunes: concluding with the declaration, "that God had ordered her to Cortona to throw herself entirely on the charity and zeal of the holy sons of Saint Francis, and also to put on the habit of the third order." The bitter tears, the ingenuous story, moved the ladies still more: and offering her their utmost influence with the Friars, they begged her meanwhile to seek a shelter with her son in their house. Margaret gladly accepted the offer, relieving herself meanwhile with thanks to her benefactresses, not in words only, but with a heart all inflamed towards a God so provident to her.

In that house she at once undertook every humble duty of a servant; and displayed as great zeal in chastising herself, as she did in serving her mistresses. The remembrance of the insults she had offered to God's majesty, inflamed her with ever increasing hatred of her body, the in-

strument of so many sins, and she waged pitiless war on it by constant fasts, prolonged scourging, and other more extraordinary acts of mortification, invented by her avenging fervor; but as her countenance still preserved the bloom and grace and beauty with which she had studied to rob God of other hearts, she now in pitiless indignation armed her fiercest vengeance against it: she tore it with her nails, she beat it with her fists, she bruised it with stones, deformed it with coals: she cut off her hair, and would at the same time have cut off her nose and lips to disfigure herself, had she not been prevented by the two ladies, whose attention was awakened to prevent her indiscreet and extraordinary rigors. Conscious that she needed a more authoritative check, they endeavored to place her under the direction of the Friars Minor. Ready as these were to assume her spiritual direction, they showed themselves as loth to grant her thus suddenly the habit of the third order, which she desired: wisely judging that they should, in so young a woman, require a longer and less fallacious trial of the sincerity of her repentance, and the constancy of her conversion. For this purpose they assigned her as a confessor, Father Giunta Bevignati, a religious most recommendable for learning and venerable for piety. A re-

fusal so justifiable, while it gave no offence to the charitable ladies, inflamed Margaret to increase her fervor in the following manner.

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## CHAPTER V.

### HER PROGRESS IN SPIRIT.

IN her first interview with the friars of the Seraphic order, God infused into Margaret's heart, a singularly respectful veneration for them, influenced by which, she readily profited by their slightest suggestions, and as promptly put them in execution. The first act of her obedience was a general sacramental confession at the feet of Father Giunta, and she gave it utterance rather by the tears of her eyes than the words of her lips: and if, to make herself understood, she at times interrupted her sobs, she never lessened her contrition; but this constantly gaining strength, made her tremble from head to foot, and fall fainting, bathed in a cold sweat, just as though she stood actually at the rigid tribunal of Christ the Judge. Yet, not satisfied with this intense grief, she returned daily to the Church to renew her accusation; she constantly invoked



her protector Saint Francis, and her special patron Saint Mary Magdalene, to infuse into her heart a sincere sorrow for her sins. To bewail them with her, she invited all who conversed with her on her return from church: to correct them, she revealed not only to her confessor, but also to her two hostesses, every evil though passing thought: to purge them away, she daily more earnestly begged of her director the most bitter penances. "Oh! let me at least," she once exclaimed, "let me who have so scandalized Monte Pulciano, let me be led back, and with bare shaven head, with close bandaged eyes, with body unadorned, and face all covered, let me be led by a lady who will go through those streets profaned by me, saying aloud: 'This is that vile Margaret, who, by her wicked life, was the scandal of all who knew her.'" The holy religious rejoiced at such effects of burning contrition, and were themselves moved to compunction and love of God; but they did not withal grant her as yet the habit of penance, which she so eagerly desired and requested.

To bring her mind to those better dispositions, which the cautious Fathers required as a condition, Margaret resolved to leave the pious ladies, and retire to a wretched hovel; where, secluded from all creatures, she might better devote her-

self to the contemplation of her crucified God, and, less observed by man, might more severely chastise her hated body. Father Giunta highly approved her project; but not so the ladies, who, daily more taken with her holy virtues, clung to her as dearer than any joy. But they too yielded at last to the warm remonstrance of Father Giunta, on condition however that Margaret's hut should be no other than a little cot of theirs near at hand, and that they should still continue in the right and privilege of providing all her wants, both proper furniture and necessary food. Lovely quality of Christian charity, to deem a gain what is done to another, and to rejoice and exult the more it divides and distributes to others!

The conditions sought were granted to the charitable ladies, and they fulfilled them beyond their promise; little however did Margaret avail herself of it for her own comfort. She gave up to her son, still young, the whole of the little bed given her, taking her own scanty rest on the bare ground, or on the floor; increasing her fasts with her other austerities, distributing almost all the abundant food sent her among other destitute poor. To become more like them, and thus better gain the affections of the Seraphic Father Saint Francis, that devoted lover of pov

erty, she asked and implored permission to beg means of supporting life like the poorest.

So at certain determined hours the humble saint begged from door to door: so cautious that she never ventured to enter a house; so modest that she never raised her eyes to the face of a man; and she would rather have met with ridicule than charity: but from the great veneration with which the people of Cortona regarded her, she obtained charity, not scorn; and charity so courteous, that when she asked soiled and torn clothes, they gave her white and whole; when she could not refuse these, she either took them to some poor sick person, or changed them for the dirty rags of some less fortunate mendicant. Nevertheless these liberal contributions of the people excited scruples in her mind, whether her mendicity, not absolutely necessary, was not prejudicial to other really necessitous persons unable to gain a livelihood by labor.

Hence she resolved with the consent of Father Giunta not to beg any longer, but to support herself by her labor. And that this should be more acceptable to God and useful to her spirit, she resolved to make it rather a source of relief to others than profit to herself. She accordingly devoted herself to attending women in childbed, aiding them not only by her labor but also by

her prayers ; so that all contended with each other for the privilege of having her in that perilous crisis. In the various houses to which she was called to attend on these occasions, her conduct was invariably the same, she asked no pay, she took no gift, and of the food set before her she took only the worst, and so little of that, that it seemed proper rather to whet hunger than recruit the body. Every moment not devoted to the care of the ladies at these times, she spent in some secluded corner in smothered, half suppressed tears, and in breathing from her broken heart, sighs of bitter repentance for her faults.

Signora Diobella having invited her once to her house to attend one of her relatives named Matilda, in childbed, she pursued the same course, and Jesus in his goodness raised her into a sweet ecstasy, lifting her bodily into the air. This ecstasy was witnessed in amazement by Signora Matilda and a poor servant, to whom Margaret frequently gave alms ; and the report soon spread through the city to the renown, and equally to the displeasure of Margaret.

The humble saint in consequence resolved to forsake entirely that service, now so disagreeable and wearisome to her, because it diverted her so much from her beloved compunction, and what was more, cut her off from the Masses, Offices

and Sermons of her venerated Fathers Minors. Yet constant in her resolve that her daily support should be the fruit of her labors, after nourishing her devotion in the Church of the Franciscans, she went silent and reserved to a shop to aid the linen and woollen weavers, for as many hours as were necessary to earn sufficient food for herself and child. So deadly an enemy has true sanctity ever been of slothful idleness and of avarice.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### HER PUBLIC PENANCE, AND RECEIVING OF THE HABIT AS A TERTIARY.

THE acute pain that pitilessly pierced the contrite heart of the happy penitent, instigated her untiringly to maltreat more and more her delinquent body, as well as to compensate by public penance for the injuries done to God's honor by her public errors. Seeing her confessor firm and determined, in refusing her permission to return to Monte Pulciano in the guise she desired, she begged him, and by her copious tears wrung from him a consent to her return for only

two days to her own village, which she had so scandalized by her evil life.

She repaired to it one Sunday, and arrived at the moment when most of the people were gathered at Mass in the parish church. The humble penitent suddenly directed her steps to it; and entered barefoot, with close cut, uncovered head, with a thick rope around her neck, and prostrated herself near the altar, repressing as best she could her anguishing sobs, for fear of disturbing the priest. The people were amazed [her parents were not there, either both dead or absent from the place at the time] at this spectacle, and not recognizing her, awaited the end of this strange scene. As soon as Mass was over, Margaret, weeping and breathless, cast herself at the feet of a lady of rank named Manentessa, who had frequently but ineffectually checked her in her licentious and dissolute life; and with bitter groanings she told her that she was that infamous Margaret who had so outraged God, dishonored her family, and scandalized her village; she asked pardon of all, and aid to obtain God's mercy for her grievous sins, which she now detested from her heart and wished to detest till death.

More she would have spoken, but tears and sobs choked her utterance. Yet what little she

did say, expressed with every mark of true compunction, so affected the people that more than one went away penitent and changed in heart. But most of all was the devout Manentessa moved: unable to contain herself at the sight, she embraced Margaret, raised her from the ground, covered her head with her veil and took her to her own home.

Still more to confirm her in her proposed penance, she too promised to enroll herself among the Tertiaries, as she did in fact; and to employ all her income in founding there a new hospice for the religious of their common Father, Saint Francis. Margaret consoled herself with this fruit of her humiliation; for her ardent zeal longed to lead back to God as many souls as her past errors had seduced, imprinting deeply on her mind and heart that *animam pro anima* so severely intimated by God.

The holy resolution of Manentessa increased in Margaret her old longing, now endured for three years, to assume at last the habit of the third order; hence returning to Cortona within the two days allowed her by her confessor, she renewed more earnestly than ever her entreaties to receive at once the habit for which she sighed, so as openly to profess to all her condition of penitent, as she had already professed that of

sinner. Father Giunta, aware of the just reluctance of his brethren, replied that it was expedient to await more certain proofs of her constancy, which her still youthful age and beauty did not raise above suspicion. "Ah, why," replied Margaret, grieving, "why do you tell me so? Have I not faithfully done whatever you prescribed these last three years? And as for the dangers which you dread from my still unfaded beauty, here I am ready to execute what I would long since have done but for your prohibition. Let me cut off this nose, mangle these lips, and I will be more disfigured than you wish, and secure of all you ask." These magnanimous expressions excited Father Giunta's admiration and his amazement at this generous fervor.

Rendered more courageous by this repulse, she returned to the convent another morning, and calling the Father Warden, told him all inflamed with Divine love: "Why are you so fearful of me, Fathers? Know that God's merciful grace has so united me to him, that no flatteries of the world, no temptations of the devil will ever separate me from him. For mercy's sake do not withhold any longer your habit of penance that I have so long solicited." So deeply did these words sink into the heart of the Father Warden, that, although he had hitherto more



obstinately than any other refused her this consolation, he immediately ordered the Custos Father Rainald (or as others say, Raymond) to give her the habit that very morning; as he did faithfully, investing Margaret with the usual ceremonies in that sacred habit then given to her through charity by another aged Tertiary who was present.

While this sacred function of the investiture was taking place, Margaret's eyes streamed with more than usual floods of tears; but so calm were they that they seemed to gush from the internal exulting of a satisfied heart, that melted in thanks to God for having made it all his own, and in sincere protestations to her new Seraphic Father, that she would ever be his worthy child, ever more and more dependent on his friars. From these the two good countesses Raneria and Maineria solicited and obtained leave to have Margaret and her ever ill-fed child to dine that morning at their house. There to fill up Margaret's cup of joy, God put it in the heart of these ladies to promise to provide means to send and maintain at school in Arezzo her son, now growing up; so that she, relieved from every earthly interruption, might give herself entirely to the embrace of God, her only good. Oh, how good is God to his faithful servants! *Quam bonus Israel Deus diligentibus!*

## CHAPTER VII.

## HER FIRST CONVERSE WITH OUR LORD.

HER new state of Tertiary excited Margaret to increase with not only the fervor of her heart, but also the austerities of her body, martyring it with more lengthened fasts, more cruel scourgings, sharper hair cloths, longer vigils at night, and perpetual silence by day, interrupted only by urgent necessity. She forbade her son, during those few days that he remained with her, to mention any earthly thing, any earthly parent, or in fact to speak of any thing but God alone. Her son obeyed her exactly : but as her hut stood in the very centre of the town, easy to be found by any one that sought it, there was a constant throng, either of the afflicted, who sought comfort from Margaret, or of the needy, who sought relief, or of the devout, who wished to partake of her fervor. She resolved, therefore, to retire to a spot more aloof from the settled part, and for this purpose asked and obtained of Signora Diobella an abandoned hut but a few steps distant from the Church of the Friars Minor.

From this cot she repaired daily at an early hour and unobserved, to the church ; and as long as the Divine Offices lasted she remained in

prayer before a crucifix, in whose open wounds, better than in any book, she read the abominable effects of her sins, and excited bitter compunction. While prostrate once at the foot of this crucifix, and weeping copiously as was her wont, Jesus began to show her more confident familiarity. He had previously, often indeed, rapt her out of her senses, and absorbed her in the sublimest contemplation of his Passion: thus, one night, when called upon by a woman in labor, she walked through Cortona lost in compassion for his sufferings; she approached unawares the brink of a deep well, and was on the point of being drowned had she not been saved by a miracle; but our Lord had never yet actually conversed with her. The first converse was on the day we speak of, when from that effigy of his, he sensibly said to her: "What wilt thou, poor little one?" Without considering the novelty of the circumstance, Margaret suddenly replied: "I seek naught, my Jesus, but thyself." But when she had returned better to herself, she reflected on what had happened, and was filled with confusion and amazement, that a God so great and so outraged by her, should deign to console her by his sensible voice! This same Crucifix is still preserved, exposed in the church where lies the fresh and fragrant body of the Saint.

By this title of *Poor little one*, Jesus infused into her mind a clear discernment of her demerit for any good, her capacity for evil alone; and by this light how did she increase in self contempt, as well as burn with gratitude for God the giver of all her good! A sentiment which he soon increased; for not long after, when in a more lengthened colloquy, he recalled minutely, in a distinct interior voice, every grace bestowed upon her while in a state of sin—the special providence by which he tore her from sin, directed her in her return home, guided her to Cortona, and caused her to be welcomed by those two pious matrons, and presented to the good sons of the great Patriarch Francis,—concluding thus:

“Fear not to obtain full remission of thy sins, which thou wilt infallibly obtain, and thou shalt inflame others, colder and more coy. I have destined thee as an example to sinners, in order that they may clearly understand, that if they will prepare to receive my grace, they will ever find me ready to give it, just as I have quickly turned to thee. I consign thee then as my precious treasure, O my poor little one, to the care and good direction of my Brethren, whom I enjoin for my sake ever to protect and instruct thee wherever thou shalt dwell; for by the special care that these Fathers take of thy salvation

their order will become more honorable to the whole world."

Margaret, who had found such assistance in the examples and counsels of those holy religious, begged the Lord to assist them more and more, and to establish more firmly their salutary institute. The Lord replied: "So it shall be, for these friars are elect, whom I cherish with deepest affection."

The little hut, wherein she so often received from Jesus the name of his *Poor little one*, is now changed into the beautiful convent of the cloistered Franciscan nuns, who in veneration of what there befel their beloved protectress, are called "Le Poverelle." But this name of *Poor little one* was now wearisome to Margaret, who panted for the greater merit and better title of *child*. Spurred on by her impatient desire of obtaining it, and animated by the familiarity which Jesus permitted, she one day in the month of December asked frankly: "And when, O Lord, shall I hear myself called thy daughter?" He replied, "that she did not yet deserve it, as she was still the child of sin, but that she should make a general confession of her sins." These unexpected words were a thunder bolt to Margaret's heart. Bursting forth into most bitter tears, she turned suppliant to her beloved Father Saint Francis, to

her beloved protectress Saint Mary Magdalene begging them to obtain for her a clearer knowledge and more intense sorrow for all her faults so as to cleanse her entirely from any remnant of sin. She was heard to such an extent, that in her new general confession made to Father Giunta, she spent a whole week, exposing every minutia, enumerating every circumstance of her whole disorderly life, with such anguishing contrition, that it would be difficult to show a Peter more full of compunction, a Magdalene of grief.

This sad confession was concluded at last, about the day of the Holy Innocents, and that same morning by order of her confessor she received the bread of angels, and while she turned her inflamed heart to her Divine Guest, she heard resounding in the very centre of her soul the sweet and desired words: "My daughter." The expression immediately deprived her of sense, absorbed her in an ecstasy of inward joy. This ecstatic accident was witnessed by the Father Warden, the Custos Father Rainald, Father Giunta, a lady, and other bystanders. Margaret recovering a little from her ecstasy, and not noticing them, exclaimed with joy and exultation: O supreme sweetness of our good God! O happy day for me, promised by my Jesus! O word full of all satisfaction, that thou hast deigned to call me daughter!

More she would have said, but excessive joy ravished her again from her senses; and the bystanders who crowded up, could hear only "Daughter of Jesus," which as she felt it so deeply, was alone thought and expressed by her. O merciful God, truly sweet with sinners! "*Si impius egerit pœnitentiam ab omnibus peccatis suis, omnium iniquitatum ejus, quas operatus est, non recordabor.*"—"If the impious man shall do penance for all his sins, I shall no longer remember all his iniquities that he hath wrought." So he promised by Ezechiel, and to prove it by a second evidence, most fortunate Margaret invites all by her example, as penitent David in consolation invited by example and voice: "Taste and see how sweet the Lord is."

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### NEW FAVORS FROM JESUS CHRIST.

THE most welcome title of daughter given her by Jesus, much as it added of tenderness to Margaret's love for him, increased greatly also the bitterness of her grief for having offended him. Her heart fairly broke when she reflected that

she had spent so much of her life in diverting her own affections, and those of others from a God so good in himself, and so bountiful to us, and her excessive grief drew unceasingly new torrents of tears from her eyes. Ever dissatisfied with her contrition and disconsolate, she begged night and day of her patron saints, greater repentance and greater grief. And although they obtained it for her, she never considered herself answered; but ever more confused and afflicted at her intense hardness of heart, she was often ready to faint with grief. So that Jesus, appeased by her outbursts of insatiable contrition, frequently appeared visibly and familiarly to her, assured her with his own mouth that he did not need greater repentance, her last general confession having remitted all, and annulled her former faults; that if like Magdalene, she wished to be assured of having obtained the pardon she desired, he himself who had already said: "Thy sins are forgiven thee," now said to her: "I absolve thee fully from all thy guilt."

This kind condescension was indeed a great comfort to Margaret; but yet she did not enjoy entire peace. The insatiableness of her grief did not arise so much from the uncertainty of the pardon obtained, as from the certainty of having offended so amiable a God; and she looked rather in her



repentance to make amends for his violated honor, than to secure remission for herself; hence, she implored him to reveal clearly what she could do to please him most. The benign Lord soon gratified her. If the pious matrons of Cortona, not to disturb Margaret's solitary contemplations, willingly deprived themselves of her assistance in their childbed; they could not suffer in peace, that their children should be deprived of the advantage of her prayers. Hence, they would have them borne to the sacred laver by no other hands than hers alone. The charitable Saint did it indifferently for all, even of the lowest class, and with all the greater action of her fervent heart; yet she felt an internal reluctance and scruple, as it were, that this exercise of charity on her part was not pleasing to God. Once having done it with the son of the Syndic of the Friars Minor, yielding to the pressing solicitations of the mother, her disquiet and agitation of conscience, the following night, were so great, that she could not close her eyes during her short repose.

To the question which Margaret addressed him, Jesus replied, "that pious as this office was, she should not so easily be induced to undertake it: and that she should no longer go begging through Cortona, but be content with whatever

food was sent her through charity by his religious; that she should keep retired in her cell, and not leave it, except to go to church, and that there, to avoid the looks of others, she should withdraw into the furthest corner near the pulpit." These admonitions of her Jesus enkindled in Margaret so ardent a desire of retirement, that to appease it, she begged to be shut up perpetually in her cell; where alone with him alone, she could always converse freely with him, free from those interruptions, which even in church occurred, either from meeting unseasonably devout matrons, or from the troublesome curiosity of bystanders, too close observers of her ravishments and tears. To this, Jesus did not consent, saying: "that she might banish herself from all other places, but not from the church of his Brethren, where he wished to be honored by her and received sacramentally."

But as he saw her most disconsolate, he not long after, and when her son had gone to study at Arezzo, moderated the repulse given, adding, "that she should observe so strict a silence, that without his order, she should not say a single word to any secular, or give them more than a passing look; and, if in time of her frequent infirmities, the aid of others was necessary, she should state her wants simply to some pious lady,

and be served by her without uttering a word not absolutely necessary: yet to the Friars she should freely open her conscience."

The faithful Margaret fulfilled this exactly; but very often with scruples and anxiety, on account of the visits paid her by persons to whom, without incivility and ingratitude, she could not refuse entrance to her little hut, or a reply to their questions.

To free her from this wearisome anxiety, Jesus compassionately ordered her "to retire as far as possible from inhabited parts, and to withdraw to the highest point of the rocky city in an abandoned hut near the castle; where with less pain she could emulate the solitary life led in the grotto of Marseilles, by her most partial protectress Saint Mary Magdalene." Margaret exulted at a command so unison to her feelings; but did not venture to put it in execution, till it had been approved by her confessor, Father Giunta. On hearing this unexpected idea, he complained not a little in the well founded fear, that in consequence of the distance of that spot from the convent, his superiors would not allow him to go as frequently as he was wont to visit her in sickness; and still more, lest in case of her dying in that place in another parish, her body should be carried for interment to some other church

than that of the Friars, who so earnestly desired this precious deposit for themselves. Hence, he would not at once determine anything, but that, for the present, she should remain in her usual cot.

Here she earnestly prayed her Jesus, to remove every obstacle to her intended greater retirement, and dissipate every doubt in her confessor's mind. Our benign Lord appeared, and assured her, "that it was already fixed and decreed in heaven, that her dead body should remain in no other hands, than those of the sons of St. Francis, to whom in life and death he had given her as a pledge of his special love." Father Giunta, on being satisfied the next day by Margaret, went himself to secure and prepare the hut rendered henceforth more conspicuous than the most august palace, by the fervor there displayed by Margaret; exalted by the whole court of heaven, who so often descended to delight with her, and by the blissful exit thence made by her triumphant spirit to heaven; and finally, by the sumptuous temple erected to guard and adorn her white and flexible body, stupendous worker of great prodigies, with which, in protestation of gratitude to her divine Glorifier, she seems constantly re-echoing to all, "O Lord God, thou hast exalted my habitation on the earth, and thou hast honoured the place of my feet."

## CHAPTER IX.

## HER TEMPTATIONS BY THE DEVIL.

HER speedy flight from Monte Pulciano, her generous return to her father's house, the loth toleration of her there, and her unabated constancy on being driven out by her own father, gained for Margaret the most tender love of the King of heaven and all his blessed subjects, but at the same time roused for her destruction the most furious rage of Lucifer and his followers. There was no crafty art, no insidious device, no impetuous assault, that the devils did not attempt to check her in the path of perfection, and entangle her anew in the old meshes of iniquity. Well they knew that by sensual love they had already gained her, and for so many years held her a slave; now to reconquer her, they lighted ever more furiously that fire of hell, that had served them so well. They carefully strove to keep ever fresh and lively the old images of beloved objects and pleasures enjoyed; and reviving these, they also inflamed the most ardent longings of craving concupiscence. Not unfrequently they filled her ears with the sensible sounds of amorous songs, and vile airs; not un

frequently the malignant fiends went so far as to raise before her eyes the beauteous forms of lascivious youths, and wanton girls, dancing madly around, and endeavouring to induce her to join their revelry. The more pleasing these allurements, the more disgusting were they to the afflicted Saint, who by constantly fixing her mind on holy thoughts, cancelled these profane imaginations; and by assiduous and painful compassion for the sufferings of her crucified Love, she crushed these insolent longings for pleasure, dissipated by fervent prayer the impure though harmonious songs, and by bloody scourging of her body, put to flight the alluring delusive crowd of impudent tempters.

They soon returned boldly to insult her with new weapons. They raised up distinctly all her many sins: they exaggerated their malice as though hers was the worst soul in the world. Then in the greatest anxiety of this horrid retrospect, they whispered that it was vain to hope for God's pardon, as he had already immutably decreed to exact eternal penalty of her in hell. She should not trust to her continued and painful tears, as God did not accept them; all the apparitions which she had enjoyed had been deceitful and fallacious, made by the demons themselves, to win her love in that lying semblance,

to gain her adoration by those splendid falsehoods. This blow would really have dejected and disheartened Margaret, had not her loving Jesus, her consoler, appeared soon to direct and encourage her. "The favors bestowed by him on her, were such," he said, "that the demons could never learn to feign or counterfeit them." He assured her that his most partial zeal for her perfection and salvation, would never suffer her to be deluded or deceived by her wily foes.

The obstinate tempters soon changed the scene, and from the depths of despair, next sought to raise her to the giddy heights of ambition. They set before her the very favors of Jesus in vain show, with the pompous display of beautiful virtues practised by her, the many signal victories she had gained, the high esteem as a great saint, which she had attained in the eyes of the Friars and of all the people of Cortona. The most humble Saint blushed that such vain thoughts could arise in her heart, once so laden with iniquity. One night while praying in her hut near the fort, she felt more vehemently urged to self complacency and vanity. Indignant against herself, she got upon the roof, and with all the fervor of her spirit cried: "Up, all ye people of Cortona, arise, arise, and with stones in your hands, drive this wicked and scandalous

woman out of your city." So loud were these cries, that in that nocturnal silence, they were heard in the lowest part of the city, many were moved to compunction, and all those haughty instigators fled, bent on repairing all these defeats by more subtle stratagems.

They feigned themselves passionately zealous for God's honor, which she would repair the better by her present penance the longer it continued ; but to give it continuance, it was absolutely necessary to moderate its rigor, diminish her long prayer, interrupt her austere solitude, relieve her too oppressed and almost annihilated body. Here too her loving Jesus was at hand, to warn her against the scarcely disguised frauds of the enemy ; directing her to "make no change in the usual tenor of her life, except to love more tenderly for his sake alone all creatures, never to judge their actions, despise any, or let her natural antipathy even for a moment alienate her from any one."

The demons, seeing all their arts unavailing to seduce Margaret, tried force. With frightful cries, they told her that if she did not give over so many devotions, they would drag her out of that cell ; and to drive her out, they hurled against her, horrid forms of deadly serpents, savage beasts, and other terrible monsters. On



One occasion, however, the demon appeared in the aspect of a gigantic and fearful dragon, who with eyes that cast forth globes of black smoke, prepared with open jaws to swallow her. Encouraged by her God, the generous heroine did not fear; but deriding the evil one for his greater deformity, boldly bid him go, and hide himself in the deep bosom of his deserved hell, and seizing a lighted fire-brand, she thrice contemptuously dashed it at his head. The brute, infuriated more by the just scorn than by the blows, seized and grasped her so as to devour her. Then poor Margaret invoked her Jesus, and at the triumphant sound of that dreaded name, the daring monster left her palpitating, and exhaled, as he went, so pestilential a breath, that the eyes of the Saint were obscured and blinded, as it were, for a whole hour. Yet she steadfastly continued her prayers, rendering affectionate thanks to the liberal Giver of her courage, to the glorious Operator of her triumphs. The devils returned more furious than ever to disturb her; and fixing themselves under the beams of the floor, they bellowed like so many mad bulls, threatening to make her descend at once to hell, to which, as they said, God had, without recourse, condemned her—a threat which Jesus came at once to deny, confirming the full

pardon of her sins already given, and once more absolving her himself. Thus, liberally, does he reward his generous champions, and generous champions are all who trust in him. "Let us put our strength in the Lord, and he will bring our enemies to naught."

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## CHAPTER X.

### HER SUFFERINGS FROM MEN.

MORE distressing to Margaret than the temptations of the hostile demons, were the vexations of friendly men; because the love of these in troubling her, often finds vigor and strength, in that very respect to God,\* whereby the hatred of the former was overcome and weakened in disquieting her.

Jesus had commanded her to observe inviolable silence, on the day of her communion, and out of her ordinary confession, to refrain from the slightest word with any person whatever. Exact obedience to this rigid injunction of her Lord, gave Margaret great trouble.

The report spread through Cortona, undoubt-

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\* Putantes obsequium se præstare Deo.

edly by an artifice of the devil, that Margaret's son, through grief for being separated from his mother, and in want of every thing, had thrown himself into a well, to end his life. This false rumor gained credit, as none of his fellow scholars could give any account of him, nor did he appear in Cortona, to solemnize Easter at home, as other scholars did. His very master in Arezzo, believing the tragic event true, came to Cortona, to break the sad tidings to the mother. He went to address Margaret in the morning after she had received communion, when she had retired to pray in her little hut, and he exposed the sad case. But seeing her undisturbed at this mournful intelligence, and with eyes fixed on the ground, refuse him all answer, even to his repeated requests for the proper salary, he was highly scandalized at her indolent and uncivil taciturnity; and, muttering rudely at so unjust and unloving a mother, he went angrily to complain to the Franciscans who directed her. Even they were amazed at what had happened, and to verify it, took him back with them to Margaret. There the confessor set forth the master's just complaints; and she spoke not. He asked the reason of her obstinate silence, she spoke not. He began to speak of holy things, hoping thus at least, to elicit a word; but she

remained silent as ever. He took her aside and begged her at least to reply to him in private; but all was useless.

He was, as yet, unaware of the severe injunction of Christ, and though he durst not condemn, he could not justify her to those present, who greatly scandalized, blamed, and rebuked her as disobedient and wilful, and as such, they represented to others. To this unconquered resolution, Jesus urged her, saying then in his usual distinct voice: "Now I shall see whether thou wilt be moved at the master's words, and whether thou wilt dare to prefer my will to that of any creature." That apparent indifference to the fate of her son, sprang from her virtuous entire disengagement, even from him, of whom she thought only to commend him to God.

One day heaven opened mentally before her; she beheld Mary the august Queen of heaven, upon her throne; Margaret approached her with humble reverence, and earnestly solicited her most powerful protection for herself and her son. Our benignant Lady promised it for both, assuring her, "In return for the love thou bearest my son, Jesus, I have made thy son a Franciscan, and a good preacher," as was ere long verified.

After he became a friar, and was in the convent

of Cortona, a passionate outburst inflicted on that mother's heart a pain that the sad news of his death had not produced. One night he did not appear at Matins; the Father Warden went in person to his cell to know the reason; finding him overcome with sleep, he called him repeatedly, but in vain; then he took a light rod and struck him gently. The sleeping youth, roused by the blows, rushed with a loud cry at the hand that struck him, and seizing the rod, was about to turn it on his corrector, against whom he showed a disrespectful anger. The prudent and discreet superior retired from the contest, returned to the choir, and left the angry youth half asleep. His mother saw all this in ecstasy, and wept and grieved as for her own fault. Early in the morning she went to the church, obtained permission from the Father Warden that the culprit should be sent to her; then she wept and said so much in detestation of his inconsiderate anger, that she made him weep bitterly. By his zealous mother's continual prayers and holy example, he ever after lived as a good religious and died a holy death.

Whenever through obedience to his superiors, he was detained out of Cortona, his good mother used on occasions to send him letters, animated with what spirit, and couched in what terms may

be seen from the following, written when she received the glad tidings of his entrance into the order of their common Father Saint Francis.

“ Blessed be God, O my son, to whose service I consecrate you. If through love of God by austerity of life, you merit to go on ever advancing in the height of his true knights, you shall be in fact of my family : then shall I be your true mother, when you faithfully observe what I enjoin. First I counsel you, that you must be born to the love of Christ, that obedience and profound humility may be planted in your soul. Follow the order of the Friars, and serve each faithfully without any partiality, or acceptance of persons. Be grateful to God for all the favors which he has bestowed on you ; and be ever bashful, reverent, modest, never murmuring at any thing. Show your love to the order by retirement, flying the useless company of seculars. Let your prayers, my son, be offered with devotion, and against your enemies ; that is, against your sins. Endeavor to manifest candidly to your confessor all that passes in your conscience ; for the sick cannot be cured unless they show the disease to the physician. Receive with great meekness the counsels given by the wise. Never fail to recite the canonical hours devoutly, at the time prescribed by the church. When any

brother corrects you for your faults, uncover your head, and kneel down at once to ask pardon for the fault for which you are rebuked. In every difficulty recal to mind the memory of your crucified Lord. Set a wall before your lips, that you may be slow to speak. If you wish by purity of heart to enjoy the familiarity of our Lord, guard your thoughts from every vice, frequently read the rule, and endeavor to be a diligent observer of all that it contains."

Another trial arose from the private devotion of some gentlemen of Cortona for her. It had reached their ears that Margaret spent the whole night in prayer, sighs, and tears; to verify it, and also to excite themselves to compunction by her example, they frequently came at midnight to the door of her hut, and remained a considerable time, listening to the devout exclamations and fervent affections that exhaled to God from that inflamed heart. The companion who was then with Margaret, perceiving this, entered the house, and took it ill that these should come to observe their doings; and to dispel any such wish on their part, she one night posted herself outside waiting for them, to make them regret their coming. As soon as they came, she received them with a volley of abuse. This time the pious gentlemen had brought with them a

low servant maid; she, hearing her master so abused, flew into a passion and replied with similar abuse. The quarrel grew so warm that Margaret, roused from her contemplation, felt obliged to go and check it. She opened the door, and endeavoring in vain to make one at least stop, she took the maid by the arm, and brought her with her masters into the house, excluding her companion that night as some satisfaction. This kind act should certainly have calmed the angry servant; but she was the more irritated at Margaret, and vomited in her face such indecent abuse, that worse could not be applied to an abandoned wretch. The mortified gentlemen rebuked her, and Margaret took it all in good part; but the servant, ever more possessed by the devil, disregarded the rebuke of her masters, despised Margaret's humiliations, concluding that she was a vile hypocrite, a proud deceiver. The truly holy penitent then threw herself at her feet, cordially thanking her for having a little enlightened her, and for having overlooked what more her great sins deserved. Unable to withstand this heroic humiliation, the proud spirit that had seized that perverted servant, fled; and she, coming to a better state of mind, retired calm and contrite.

Not as soon ended another worse trial, long



before announced by our Lord, and occasioned by the greediness of the companion already mentioned. The great weakness of the stomach, which Margaret suffered, induced her confessor to oblige her to use a little wine in these faint turns. Some charitable persons having kindly offered what she required, she sent her companion to their house to get it, with strict injunctions to accept no more than a little flagon, and that only once a month. But abusing the charity of those liberal benefactors, she went in Margaret's name every day, and solicited not only for wine in good measure, but many other things that the austere penitent did not need, but which were for her family, or to satisfy her own gluttony. This importunity, notorious to the whole city, not only wearied the liberality of some benefactors, but discredited Margaret with most; the more so, as the ungrateful woman, in the houses where she went, often turned into derision Margaret's actions, and threw discredit on her virtue. Jesus himself revealed this lamentable catastrophe to Margaret; and although she felt it most sensibly, she nevertheless showed herself ready to let these unfavorable opinions of her take their course. But as it involved so much scandal of others, Father Giunta prudently resolved to dispense forever with that sordid babbler, and substi-

tuted another companion, named Egidia, who made great progress in the path of virtue by Margaret's holy example; and by her prayers was released from purgatory, and soared to heaven to the very choir of Cherubim.

But nevertheless the discredit thrown on Margaret daily gained ground, and assumed such dark colors, that the common veneration was changed into public contempt; she was insulted as a hypocrite, avoided as one possessed, jeered at as a fool; and some declared themselves scandalized, no less at the stolid credulity of those who came from distant parts to venerate such a woman, as at the loving friendship accorded her by the Franciscans. There were some too who, measuring Divine clemency by their own unfeeling hearts, publicly declared it impossible, that those graces attributed to Margaret could have been communicated by a just God, to a woman whose life had been so scandalous. Jesus himself seemed inclined to corroborate these aspersions, by withholding for a long time from his servant those public exterior signs of ecstatic raptures, copious tears, amorous enthusiasm, which had first won her such high veneration from all.

And yet these impudent detractions so displeased Jesus, that appearing once to Margaret, he declared himself greatly irritated against these

backbiters, and was about to pronounce a severe sentence against them, resolved not to admit any mediation in their favor, so that she should cease to interpose in future in their behalf. But this prohibition inflamed her more, like another Moses, to beseech him to be appeased, and disarm his wrath : or at least to let all the fault fall upon her, and let them go entirely unpunished. Thus her heroic and fervent charity, not contented with the counsel, "Pray for them that persecute you," advanced to that, "Do good to them that hate you." Learning certainly that a vile woman slandered her in all quarters, in regard to the aid which she solicitously gave the needy, she immediately took off her veil and dress, gave up every better article of food she had at the time, and sent all as a gift to that wretch ; and learning moreover that she was harassed by some creditors, she set herself to find what the event proved the not inconsiderable sum needed to extricate her from her embarrassment. "Many waters cannot quench charity."

These common discourses against the poor Saint, by persons even of conspicuous rank, recommended by learning, and even by the religious profession, threw the friars into great consternation, and not a few of them at last joined in the false alarm so that Father Giunta himself,

by the example of the most prudent and pious religious, was induced to fear at least some illusion in his penitent, and subjected her to most austere and painful tests. The disconsolate Margaret was ready to give up the ghost, to see herself thus held lightly by her beloved brethren, and thus treated by her kind confessor. Yet she suffered all in peace, and completely concealed her anguish.

But what she could not dissemble with her Jesus, was the hateful charge of illusion. Her Lord assured her "that the deceits of the devil had never had any effect upon her, nor should have, in consequence of the special care which He in his love would take of her." But this certainty always seemed less to the more venerable friars, now completely alarmed and disheartened by the scandalous babblings then current.

On assembling at a Provincial Chapter at Sienna, they debated among other things on the mode to be pursued with Margaret, not only to justify their guidance of her, but even to secure their good name. The conclusion was that at the close of the Chapter, the Father Custos came to Cortona, and ordered Father Giunta to discontinue his frequent conferences with Margaret, and never to visit her in her hut except in times

of long and grievous illness, and then not more than once a week.

So stringent an order wounded Margaret's most afflicted heart in the most acute and sensible manner; yet she desired, that at any sacrifice it should be most exactly obeyed, convinced with Saint Gregory, that "obedience is the only virtue that plants all other virtues in the soul, and preserves them there." But she could not without weeping bitterly, weeping tears that moved her loving Lord. He actually appeared to her visibly, and with a more than usually loving air asked what caused such bitter tears. Still weeping she replied, that they had no other source than the murmurs of her brethren the friars, to whom He had so specially commended her. "Thou shouldst rejoice, O daughter, rather than weep. Hast thou not often prayed to me to make thee like my and thy beloved Magdalene? And yet how did not merely the Scribes and Pharisees, but my most enlightened disciples, murmur at her who had such confidence in me, and at me who praised her! And yet I wish thee more like me than Magdalene, as a most special sister: prepare then for a dereliction, the greater, as it shall be more like to what I suffered for thy love." Encouraged by the words, Margaret offered herself to every cross which He

was pleased to send; and He accepting her oblation, soon prepared a trial worse than any that her spirit had yet experienced.

The good friars, seeing that Father Giunta's obedient reserve in conversing with and visiting Margaret, did not in the least appease the murmurs against them all, resolved at last to remove that Father from Cortona, and station him in a remote part. On receiving this irrevocable order, he himself bore the sad tidings to Margaret, then suffering from a painful malady; she heard him with all intrepidity, but she felt the pain the more excruciating, as she more and more perceived the detriment caused by the absence of that venerated confessor, so often praised by the very lips of her Jesus. Moreover, not long after, the superiors for the same motives removed from Cortona the good Father John, substituted by Father Giunta to direct her in his stead, so that the poor Saint saw clearly that her alarmed brethren not only unwillingly heard her confession, but were loth to see her so fixed in their church. Hence, rather than in the least disturb their quiet or tarnish their good name, she preferred to sacrifice the quiet of her own soul, and the satisfaction of her own devotion, going to communicate out of that church the centre of her affections, because it had been a

source of so many lights from God, so many succors in the examples and counsels of the religious.

Yet more than any other, she frequented the parish church of St. George, which was but a short distance from her hut. In this church a most painful incident occurred. The pastor after hastily confessing her, communicated her so carelessly, that instead of the consecrated pyx, he took an unconsecrated one, kept also in the tabernacle in those times, to protect, in some measure, the true sacrament from the sacrilegious impiety of sorcerers, who stole consecrated hosts from the ciboriums. After such a communion, Margaret, not feeling her wonted fervor, feared some sinful indisposition in herself; and while, in great grief, she sought to ascertain it, Jesus, moved at her extreme anguish, disclosed to her that the carelessness of the priest was the sole cause of her present coldness. Such coldness and insensibility of devotion, she often experienced in these sad times; our Lord adding to her other crosses, aridity of spirit, more torturing to the saints than any outward torment. "Many are the tribulations of the just;" and they are greater as the perfection to which they have ascended is higher. "He is a vessel of election I will show him how much he must suffer for

my name;" there being no steps of greater perfection than that of Calvary, already trodden by Christ, and by all other glorious followers of the Crucified. "By many tribulations it behooveth us to enter the kingdom of heaven."

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## CHAPTER XI.

### HER SUFFERINGS FROM GOD.

As the cross is God's happy instrument in forming saints, and as he had led Margaret to a most eminent sanctity, he employed it beyond all the usual laws of his providence. For seven long years he kept that venerated confessor away from her, and without giving her in any other point, any compensating consolation. In those dark days, he rarely appeared, and the other citizens of heaven, once so familiar to her, showed themselves less frequently; the poor Saint being left solely to the comfort to be derived from her heroic patience and resignation to God, and even of this, God, for her greater pain, permitted that she should seem to have little or none. But even this was not the severest trial sent by God. The torment, which was a real martyrdom for



her, was her extreme horror at the offence done her beloved God : a horror which God constantly increased to transfix still more her contrite heart with two most acute points, the remembrance of the past, and the uncertainty of the future.

By the light of his amiability, which God ever more distinctly infused, she, by contrast, ever better discovered the guilt of a heart, not only obstinate in not loving him, but bent on hating him ; and she was conscious to herself, of having often contracted that guilt ; she frequently heard them distinctly enumerated by God, to her inexpressible grief. Inflamed with zeal to make atonement for so great a wrong to the Almighty, she but felt her own inability to make any reparation. Filled with this thought, she once burst into tears before confession, and thus choked her intense grief: "Ah! Lord, were my body of the weight and bulk of the whole world, and this huge body melt in tears, and bloody sweat, at my violent grief for my manifold offences against thy immense goodness, alas! I could not even then satisfy for the lightest fault I have committed."

Her pain was sharpened by the humble, but alarming fear, that she might sometime second her many perverse inclinations ; that she might sometime sink under the violent assaults of her

infernal enemies, nor did she ever deem herself sufficiently secure from the flattery of the one, or the violence of the other. Hence, she earnestly solicited the prayers of others, and anxiously asked all, whether there was a hope that she would never again return to offend her beloved Maker. And, whenever Jesus showed himself with a confiding air, this was suddenly her question which she eagerly put him: this the grace which she earnestly implored. Among other occasions, this happened one Christmas, when Jesus, appearing to her in that beautiful semblance, showed himself ready to grant any request made; she at once, as the only grace, implored that of never offending him more. He seemed astonished that she did not rather ask to go and enjoy him in heaven; but she frankly declared, that if he would only grant her never more to offend him, he might condemn her to hell, if it were his good will.

Pleased with so magnanimous a resolution, Jesus assured her, as a reward, he would preserve *her* with special care; but that, nevertheless, excruciating fear, that agony of martyrdom, should be ever kept alive in her; concluding, "Thy martyrdom, O daughter, I wish to be simply this, great fear of losing, or of possibly offending me." To discover ever more the value of the

beloved gem, and to be in constant dread of losing it, is surely a great martyrdom.

Of this violent martyrdom, even Margaret's body felt the torments, not only because she in revenge for its having so much contributed to her offences against God, ever pitilessly maltreated it; but still more, because she besought of God the most painful disorders, in order to diminish the danger of returning to the dreaded sins by its incentives. God heard her to that point, that there was not a spot in her body free from almost constant pain, nervous convulsions, burning fevers, splitting headaches, dreadful pains in the bowels, weakness of the stomach, oppression of the heart, a wasting dysentery, devouring pustules, especially in the mouth, which made her teeth so sensitive, that the mere breathing the fresh air, and still more, chewing and swallowing necessary food, was often a deadly spasm.

Nevertheless this cup full of suffering but inflamed her thirst for greater bodily afflictions, saying with Job: "Be this my consolation, that afflicting me with grief he spare me not." Hence to console her, Jesus once revealed to her, that for the residue of her life he had assigned her sufferings so much greater than those hitherto endured, that she would naturally have preferred

the torments of the martyrs to undergoing them. And he kept his promise, so fearful were the various excruciating maladies which at once assailed her emaciated frame. In these diseases she was at times so overcome by pain as to be unable to apply her mind to recite the Lord's prayer; nevertheless her Divine Master warned her that it was his will that she should not even then omit her usual prayer, and should ever reject any pleasing restorative. A command far different from that usually given to other saints by his discreet and more than maternal love. Yet this rigor on his part was not unattended by special graces. He not only comforted her spirit to support with unconquered fortitude these universal sufferings, but so strengthened her body that she could at their height drag herself to the church, and go around the city wherever it was necessary. Moreover, in the pure fire of so many tribulations, he extinguished in her every sordid flame of former fires, so that she no longer felt in her wasted body any sting of the senses, nor any phantasm of impurity hateful to her chaste mind; and her Jesus once could say: "Thou hast become so pure that I reckon thee among the virgins, and in their choir prepare thee a throne of glory equal to Magdalene's." Oh how true it is, "that to those who love God, all things cooperate into good!"

## CHAPTER XII.

## HER APOSTOLIC LIFE.

THE unconquered patience constantly maintained by Margaret in so many different internal and external martyrdoms, had now richly endowed her with that virtuous training so necessary for gaining other souls, as according to our Saviour's declaration all rests on that base, "In patience ye shall possess your souls." And God in his mercy had raised her up as a contrite sinner and favorite penitent to gain the most lost souls, so he honored her with the glorious titles of Mirror of Sinners, Fisher of Souls.

Persuaded hitherto that she was to effect this simply by her prayers, strengthened by her example, she increased still more her holy exercises to wean herself entirely from all human intercourse, and to live in perfect solitude with her Magdalene, buried for almost forty years in the Cavern of Marseilles.

To divert her from this beloved exercise, her Jesus began to show himself grieving over the wickedness of the Christian world; and he one day said: "The iniquities of men have now reached such a height, that I scarcely venture

to pray my eternal Father in their behalf, and my mother Mary fears in some measure to have recourse to me to implore mercy." And he added, "that this had caused the great and fearful overthrow of the Christian army by the Saracens, and the many melancholy revolutions that kept all Europe in confusion." On another occasion, during the Paschal solemnities, she expected him, and begged him to appear in that joyful semblance: he appeared, but so afflicted and disconsolate, as though his dolorous passion were about to begin: expressing all the kind of sins by which human depravity renewed the fearful torments in every member of his Divine body, "again crucifying in themselves the Son of God," as he had already said by his apostle Paul; saying in conclusion, "that more Christians now-a-days than Hebrews of old conspired to transfix him, and wound him so, that could his body have equalled in size the whole world, even in that immense body there would not be a spot exempt from wounds and bruises: so many and oft repeated were then the iniquities of men of every sex, age, and condition."

Margaret was certainly not as horrified at the discovery of her impure lover's corpse, as now at the sight of the far more mangled body of her most adored Saviour. To comfort him she re-

newed her protest "that she wished alone to serve him better than all creatures together slighted him." To appease him, she employed against herself unmerciful scourgings, that made the blood flow freely from her whole lacerated body. But hearing him still disconsolately complain that so many souls dear to him were lost, she at last understood what he meant to tell her, and resolved to leave her beloved retirement and devote herself to advance the salvation of all, so desired by her Jesus. She implored every assistance, which he promised, renewing her titles of Mirror of Sinners, Mother, and Fisher of Souls, already mentioned and set forth in the outset of this history.

She undertook her apostolic career with so great energy, that there was not a vice that she did not attack; not a scandal that she did combat; not a sinner that she did not seek: she restored the frequentation of the sacraments, the due veneration of the Saints, proper respect for the Church, and led back wanderers to the right path. Those whom she influenced she sent to the friars to confess: and they were so many that poor Father Giunta, who had now returned to Cortona, unable to attend to the great multitude who came daily to his feet to purge themselves of a misspent life, several times complained to

Margaret. The fame of these many miraculous conversions was soon diffused; so that persons hardened in vice came to her from Perugia, Gubbio, Florence, and even Rome, to obtain compunction through her wonderful efficacy. Thus Father Giunta attests as an eye witness, that they came not only from Apulia and other distant parts of Italy, but even from France and Spain, nobles, plebeians, laymen, and ecclesiastics, that they then returned well satisfied with their long journey, because they went away different from what they came. But her manner was not the same to all, but she was now placid, now austere; and in order that she might adapt herself to each, God very often enabled her to penetrate with his heavenly light their internal dispositions, and the most hidden secrets of their hearts. She encouraged all, proposing her own example, having been, as she said, a worse sinner than they: and yet so lovingly welcomed back by Divine mercy, and treated with such superabundance of heavenly favors, as she constantly proved, and they saw in part with their own eyes, each being able to admire in her the words of scripture: "Many are the scourges of the sinner: but mercy shall encompass him that hopeth in the Lord."

Such ardent and efficacious zeal naturally pro-



voked the powers of evil; and they, to recover the lost ground, resorted to every crafty artifice. They awakened against her the now appeased slander, that people should be ashamed to put faith in a visionary, follow a hypocrite: they instigated the most esteemed religious, Franciscans and others, to protest strongly against a woman, still young and once so erring, admitting in her cell men of every age and state; that ignorant, and a woman, she usurped the duties that belonged exclusively to the ministers of the gospel. They assailed her herself once more with most troublesome stings of vanity, seeing herself consulted by so many as an oracle, obeyed by all as a great spiritual master; they made her long for her sweet contemplations, which could ill comport with her constant conversation: they disturbed her also with scruples; and once among others when a priest had recourse to her for counsel, and she, as he took leave, gave him her blessing, they set this act before her in the light of an execrable presumption, through which she, a vile woman, had dared to bless a consecrated minister of God.

But Jesus dissipated all these malignant arts; and as he had led her to these undertakings, he encouraged her to persevere, assuring her of his singular joy in all that she effected, and his spe-

cial assistance in all that remained to do for the salvation of others, for he was the Lord who "guardeth the souls of his saints, and delivereth them out of the hands of the sinner."

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### CHAPTER XIII.

#### REMARKABLE INSTANCES OF SUCCESS.

THE special assistance with which God in his mercy favored Margaret's holy zeal, was evinced most clearly in the following events. The unbridled licentiousness of a young noble of Cortona, went so far that he carried off the wife of a poor mechanic, and unblushingly took her to his house to gratify his impure desires. His great power kept in check, not only the just resentment of the injured husband, but even the due action of the timid magistrates. This scandal, though commonly condemned, was yet publicly unpunished. His afflicted mother admonished her delinquent son in every reasonable way, but all in vain. At last one day, after commending herself with more than usual earnestness to God, she attacked him more zealously; and setting before him an angry God, hell open,

the disgrace of his name, the dishonor of all his family, she endeavored in every way to bring him to yield; but seeing him still obstinate, she threw herself at his feet, and with copious tears besought to let them at least quench the flames of his guilty love, and not to suffer his beastly love for a strange woman to overcome all affection for an afflicted mother. The son said that all this grief moved him, but did not in the least alter his mind, and sighing added, that such an alleviation might perhaps follow his swallowing a morsel from the hand of Sister Margaret. The hopeful mother flew at once to her cell, and of the loaves so often given by herself in alms, now asked for herself in charity a single remnant. This unusual request excited humble Margaret's suspicion, and she refused; but understanding the object, and threatened with the guilt of that lost soul, she gave it, adding fervent prayers to God that it might produce the desired effect. And so in fact it did. Scarcely had the son swallowed that hard crust received from his mother's hands, than he felt himself burn with far different flames, and bursting into tears of true compunction, he suddenly restored to the husband his ravished wife, sought to repair the wrong by a large sum of money, and by a contrite confession at the feet of a priest, relieved his

soul of its burden of sin ; so constant in detesting them, so devoted in amending his life, that he now became as great an example as he had been a scandal to all.

A mortal malady had reduced to extremity another young libertine, and the devil in this state had brought him to the last despair, setting before him as unpardonable excesses, those very youthful sins, which he had once persuaded him were very venial frailties. Notwithstanding the warnings of physicians, the persuasions of confessors, the tears of his mother, he was about to die in despair, without the aid of the sacraments. In such a terrible crisis, the poor mother ran to implore Margaret's aid. Raising her heart to God, she for a time retired to pray : then returning to the disconsolate lady, she told her to take her Father Confessor, Father Giunta, to visit the obstinate dying man, hoping that he would be moved. In fact, as soon as Father Giunta set foot in that room, his heart was suddenly changed, and he not only conceived hopes of pardon, but obtained it, so exact and contrite was the confession which he made to the Father, overwhelmed with astonishment at so sudden a change. On his departure however, the spirit of despair again seized the wretched man, and in terrors like the first, he frantically refused to

receive the holy Viaticum. His mother hastened again to the miraculous Margaret, who immediately began to pray, and felt herself answered by Jesus, "that the mother was unworthy of that grace, for her lack of gratitude for that already received; yet that he would nevertheless grant it for her sake:" and so quickly did he grant it, that on her return, she found her son willing and hungering after the rejected Food, which he soon after received with the most exemplary signs of Christian piety.

A literary man of Cortona was overcome by the most headlong despair; to deliver himself from all the miseries into which an untoward accident had plunged him, he hung himself by a rope attached to a beam in his room. He was almost lifeless when Margaret ran up, called thither by her Jesus, and by the aid of her two companions led thither for the purpose, she cut the rope, and preserved the unfortunate man from temporal and from eternal death—a benefit which rendered him ever after a devout client of his great deliverer, and full of affectionate confidence in her. Yet she ever showed the greatest reluctance in admitting men to this confidence, no matter how spiritual they were; and she constantly refused to enter their houses, however urgent they might be, or specious the motives.

Daily experience convinced the Father Custos, Friar Rinaldo, that to deliver the most sin-bound souls from slavery, there was no surer expedient than to induce them to converse even once with Margaret; having once toiled in vain to deliver one, he one day ordered Margaret to go to his house. The most obedient Saint durst not disobey this command, yet not thinking that she should yield, she begged first to consult her Jesus in prayer. On consulting our Lord, he appeared; and praising her highly for the step she had taken, in face of the virtuous impulses given her, by her zeal for the salvation of that soul, and in reward for her virtuous self-restraint, he promised to soften that heart at the first word she should say on their meeting, and this was exactly verified.

A still more painful command was given her by our Lord, after having been received by her sacramentally, on the morning of May 5th. The church of Arezzo was then governed by a prelate, most unfitted for his episcopal duties, seeking only to maintain and extend, by force of insolent soldiery, the signorial rights of his diocese; caring little or naught to banish vice by prayer, good example, and the preaching of others. Our Lord, on that day, deploring with Margaret such a bishop, enjoined her in his

name, to warn him frankly of his shortcomings, and also to call him to her, to hear from her His divine will. For a low woman, his subject, (for Cortona was in the diocese,) to rebuke a prelate so dreaded by all, was a hazardous and difficult thing, as Margaret well knew; hence, she frequently sought to decline it. But our Lord persisted in his expressed will. She had at last to rebuke, and summon the Bishop. And well was it for him, that with due veneration, he heard and fulfilled the command of heaven, given him by the lips of the Saint. She, at last, told him that, the better to prepare to receive from God the pardon of his grievous sin, he should not defer the solemn opening of the oratory, erected by her with the alms of the faithful, near her hut, in honor of St. Basil the great; and in this too, the contrite and amended Bishop obeyed her.

But Margaret's zeal aided the people of Cortona, even more than the prelate. Jesus often showed himself armed against them with destroying scourges: to disarm him, she interposed most fervent prayers, undertook the most rigorous penances, and so successfully, that she often heard him declare, that her mere look saved those citizens from the impending chastisements of his just wrath. But that they might not incur again the terrible danger of God's anger, she devoted

herself with all her zeal to reform the sinful ways of a people so dear to her. A fierce civil sedition raged in that city, by which, plotting against each other's lives, every one expected to be cut off by open violence or secret treachery; and such deaths occurred but too frequently, and with the usual consequence, that the blood of one enkindled the war more fiercely among many more; hence, the very death of enemies gave new life to enmity, and their very diminution increased it. The endeavors of the better disposed citizens, and the authority of the public magistrates, urged by Margaret's zealous entreaties, had been applied to remove so deadly a source of evil; but all in vain, so that even the Saint's great courage began to despair of remedying it. Yet Jesus still urged her to new efforts, saying, that "as he had appointed her the way of the desperate, these desperate undertakings were exactly for her." She, accordingly, went on intrepidly, and called in to the great work the voice and hand of her friars, especially of her zealous confessor Father Giunta. But the more these endeavored to calm the wrathful minds, the more the devils labored to exasperate anger against the promoters of peace; so that Margaret's and Father Giunta's characters were assailed with vilest slanders, and they themselves



subjected to the most contemptuous treatment ; so that poor Father Giunta, disheartened at being unable for days to say a word to Margaret without danger, resolved not only to abandon that unfortunate attempt, but even to leave Cortona, and like him who said : " We have cared for Babylon, and it is not healed, let us leave it ;" but Margaret detained him, directed by her Jesus to say, that those ungrateful souls had cost him too much, and that though ungrateful he had not abandoned them : and that as he had purchased the title of Savior by the most bitter confusion, painful sufferings, sweat, and toil, so it was to be gained by his followers, rather by the sighs of an afflicted soul than by the affliction of a weary body, more by the use of patience than by the exercise of preaching ; and that it was his greatest reproach, that his ministers sooner lost heart in converting the obstinate, than devils did in perverting the devout. Margaret, too, was encouraged by these words ; and both pursued more earnestly their patient endurance, and their exhortations now animated by most fervent prayers, overcome by which, Jesus at last declared to her : " Lo, I have heard thy prayers, and we will soon reconcile the hitherto discordant souls. Thou, O my daughter, art a rose white in innocence, ruddy in charity,

whatever thou shalt ask my Father in my name, thou shalt quickly obtain, and those who have recourse to thee for my sake, shall receive special grace; for when thou dost present thyself before my Father, all the Seraphim of heaven rejoice in thy love, because they know that thou shalt be one day placed on a throne in their midst."

Cortona alone was too narrow a sphere for the flame of Margaret's zeal; it extended its conquests afar. War, rather than sedition, kept the people of Forli in arms against the neighboring towns: among these the Bolognese kept in their pay a large body of French troops about to enter on a deadly conflict. Margaret informed of this, more by her Jesus than by public rumor, employed all the efficacy of her prayers, to avert that ruin of souls and bodies, and restore to peace those hostile places: offering to receive on herself any blow prepared against them by God's provoked justice. God alone knows whether her offering was accepted; what all saw, was the perfect reconciliation among them, resulting unexpectedly from an unforeseen mediation of the great Pontiff, Nicholas III.

For this pope, or his predecessor as some think. Margaret by her prayers before God obtained another benefit, common to all Christendom. The Holy See had issued a bull, by virtue of

which, the indulgence of Our Lady of the Angels of Portiuncula was tacitly repealed. Our Lord expressed his regret to the Saint, and declared his intention of punishing severely the one who, persuading the Pope to repeal it, had closed on the Christian world an asylum, in which, more than in any other of those times, lost souls were brought back to the way of salvation. She then prayed to God, and obtained that another interpretation should be given by the Pontiff himself to that prohibition; so that the celebrated and most desired Pardon of Assisi regained its primitive use and credit. In promoting this restoration, Margaret's zeal sought also to aid Purgatory; for she had already been assured by her Jesus, that the souls there received a most special relief from that indulgence. This was not her only interest in them; so devoted was she ever in remembering them, so constant in praying for them, that in their frequent apparitions to her, they always styled her their most loving mother; and Father Giunta mentions many who were delivered from those flames by her intercession. I shall merely mention those, who had more intimate relations with Margaret, and were more special objects of the Divine mercy, which for the comfort of sinners, God wished to depend so much on Margaret's action.

In the first year of her conversion, she most earnestly interceded for her mother's soul: Jesus told her that he was much pleased by her affection, and that, moved by her prayers, he had already received her mother into heaven. He said the same at another time of her father, adding that he had at first increased his pain, that he might the sooner go purged to heaven. On the death of her good companion Egidia, Margaret learned that in reward not only for her great virtue, but also for her services to herself she would be placed in heaven in the order of Cherubim; but that she was detained for a time in Purgatory in punishment for some over zealous indignation, in showing little compassion for the failings of others, and rebuking them excessively. To relieve her from this detention, Margaret exerted herself as became her great love, and the great obligations she was under to her: and a month after saw her joyfully exult in heaven amid the Cherubim.

Three persons had died, but with such apparently bad dispositions, that all supposed that they had sunk directly into hell. Yet even for these the good Margaret prayed earnestly, and on the solemnity of Candlemas she was assured by her Jesus, that all three by a triumph of his mercy had been condemned only to Purgatory;

and that though the guilt of their many sins demanded a long detention in suffering, yet that for the sake of her intercession he would detain them only twenty-five years.

Two merchants travelling in a wood were killed by robbers: they obtained of God at that awful moment the merciful grace of justifying their souls by a true act of contrition, but this was not so fervent as to free them from all punishment with the sin. While they were paying this last farthing in the prison of Purgatory, both sought refuge in Margaret's prayers at a moment when she was praying with her usual fervor in her hut, and they soon induced the compassionate Saint to persuade the relatives to satisfy some debts of the assassinated men.

On the death of the Custos Father Rinaldo, who had given her the Tertiary habit, object of so many vows, she endeavored to return the benefit by offering up most urgent prayers for his holy soul; but Jesus told her that he had been so holy that he went straight to heaven. But not so another soul that suddenly appeared to her, saying that he suffered horrid pains in Purgatory without any relief in punishment, for comforts taken in life and too great ease granted to the body: that she should intercede for him, and warn his wife not to live indolently, unless she wished to suffer after death like him.

She obtained more bountiful grace for her benefactors, devoting to their good the tender gratitude of her loving heart. As she was constantly receiving greater benefits from the order of St. Francis, so she implored greater blessings for the whole Seraphic Order; and he, in regard for her, increased their numbers, exalted their name, perfected their spirit, and promised her ever to retain that precious treasure in his church, and as such to guard it with special vigilance.

More apparently, yet no more solidly, substantial was the blessing which she obtained for the Countess Maineria, her first benefactress in Cortona; she obtained for her a constant series of afflictions both of soul and body, whereby, purged from her faults, weaned from earthly objects, she was filled with love only for the Crucified, to that degree that, to liken her more to himself and render her scarcely less generous than Margaret herself, our Lord granted her to wish no satisfaction but that of weeping bitterly under the cross. "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

## BOOK II.

## VIRTUES AND GIFTS OF MARGARET.

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CHAPTER I.

## HER HUMILITY.

WHEN Margaret obtained from her Jesus the desired and most prized title of Daughter, her Angel Guardian often appeared as if in the act of removing every defect from her soul and infusing all virtues, commencing with humility as the base and support of all others. With this too, I begin the second book, in which I collect that precious part of her stupendous actions which it has been hitherto impossible to relate, on account of the uncertainty of the time when they occurred.

That distinct and most vivid knowledge which she acquired of her sins, and of the natural facility of recommitting them, gave her from the very outset of her conversion such a self-contempt, that the special favors bestowed on her by the most exalted of the denizens of heaven,

and even by the King of Glory himself, could not divert her from it. Thus, notwithstanding the general absolution of all her sins given her by Christ himself, and the assurance he gave her of her persevering exempt from any mortal fall, she believed and treated herself as the opprobrium of the world, the most ungrateful and perverse of all creatures. Her benign Saviour often seemed to contradict this, but always in a way to make her ingenuous humility come forth more triumphant and more beautiful. Pierced more acutely one day with her great contrition for her past and present sins, she fell at the feet of her crucifix, and broke forth into these words: "Oh that I had never been born, now that I see how much I have offended thee, and how little I correspond to thy grace!" Her loving Jesus did not suffer this wish, which sought to deprive him of his predilect spouse, and he suddenly complained, saying, that if she would remember his mercy to Magdalene the sinner, to Matthew the publican, to the thief on the cross, and so many others, she would confide more in him. "Yes," she replied; "but there was never child of Adam so unworthy of thy gifts as I, or less grateful for them." And although Jesus reassured her, declaring her all covered with his graces, and most pleasing in his eyes, she never-



theless, firmly persuaded of it, protested that she could see no merit in herself worthy of such condescension on his part; and so true did this seem, that all the world could not convince her of the contrary; indeed, rather than give up this opinion, she was ready to accept all the pains of hell yawning beneath her feet. Jesus replied that, "Not in hell, but in heaven," did he wish her, and wish her so near to himself, that he desired her enrolled in the sublime order of the highest Seraphim. And hereupon he raised her in ecstasy, showing her the lofty throne destined for her in heaven. So radiant a sight did not dazzle her in the least, or diminish one iota her low opinion of herself. Full of shame, and as it were of horror, she reminded our Lord, that even for a vessel of election like St. Paul, such a height would have seemed excessive; how much more for her who had been a sink of all iniquity and filth! hence she implored him not so to debase his graces, to esteem more highly his own precious gifts.

Our Lord was so pleased with such constant and refined humility, that in recompense he renewed all his previous promises, and entered into a new contest with her, ordering her henceforward even in public to style herself solely by the name of his elect daughter. Now indeed

her most humble heart was truly afflicted: yet she did not yield, but resisted more earnestly and vigorously; and strengthening herself with the very arms of her Jesus, she implored him, by the very love he bore her, to release her from such a command, and even to take from her all his outward favors, which could in any way increase her reputation with men. He consented only to the former, declaring that these outward marks of his love were necessary for his glory, whereby sinners were to be encouraged to return to him; that she should, therefore, make her own feelings yield readily to the interests of the salvation of so many souls.

Although Margaret finally yielded to these unanswerable arguments, yet she wished to retain the liberty of using on her side every art to hide from others' looks, and she ever used it most vigilantly. Whenever she felt enkindling within her those flames of love which ravished her to ecstatic delight with her Jesus, she eagerly hastened to dismiss whoever was then conversing with her, or at least to hide from their sight in some solitary corner; she not only abandoned those formulas of self-depreciation so dear to her, seeing that they returned full of veneration and praise; but even refrained for the same reason from her frequent fervent discourse on

divine things. This change causing scandal rather than admiration in a learned religious, he one day asked her the reason. She gave one founded entirely on her humility, saying, that God might justly deny her those lights and that fervor to which she had corresponded so badly.

The houses which she most studiously avoided were those alone in which she was invited and received with signs of greater esteem, and the persons whom she sought to serve were precisely those who thought and spoke worst of her. A matron, seeing Margaret change her abode a second time, derided her as frivolous, and blamed her as talkative; Margaret learned this charge from our Lord, and this was enough to induce her to seek especially the lady's friendship, and to become as a very servant in her house. In a word, she received with pleasure every accusation not tainted with heresy, sought it eagerly, truly convinced that she deserved more.

But the more she sought to depreciate herself, the more God exalted her reputation, giving success to all her undertakings recommended to him by her, hearing the prayers, and fulfilling the desires of all who had recourse to her. Hence it was that there flocked to her crowds of persons of all conditions, even from the remotest parts of Europe, to implore her mediation, which

had proved so favorable with Almighty God. But this concourse of revering people became so distasteful to her, that tears often streamed from her eyes, and expressions of great grief fell from her lips. And among the old traditions of my country, I may add this too, that my fellow-citizens had no small share in giving Margaret this affliction.

There was in the town of San Sepolero, (a city so called from the veneration there paid to an exact model of the holy sepulchre of our Lord Jesus Christ, composed of more relics than even that at Jerusalem,) a child possessed and so strangely agitated by the infernal spirits that three strong, robust men could not hold it. The distracted parents had it several times exorcised: and that the exorcisms might be the more aided by their faith, they caused them to be renewed in the sanctuaries most famous for their frequent liberation of the possessed. The infernal spirits always promised to leave that innocent body, but only when driven by the prayers of Sister Margaret who dwelt in Cortona. His parents resolved to carry him to Cortona, a distance of about thirty miles. The journey was accomplished safely, but on reaching Castel Gherardo, from which you can descry the towers of the fortress of Cortona, those

malignant spirits became most perverse, and agitated the wretched child most fearfully; they howled with rage, and, determining to go no further, so rooted the boy's body to the ground, that all the efforts of his stout companions failed to carry him a step further: till suddenly with a fearful howl the leader of those demons declared that he would go, as he could not stand such proximity to Margaret, whose prayers burnt fiercer than the flames of hell. In fact he vanished, and with him all the rest of that legion. Although the child was thus delivered, the exulting parents nevertheless pursued their way to Cortona, wishing to testify not only respect but gratitude at Margaret's feet, and to show to her and all others their rescued son, as a trophy of her triumphs. But for the very reason that it was a great and manifest triumph of Margaret's virtues, she complained bitterly, and unable to deny a fact attested by so many, she detracted from herself all praise, endeavoring to persuade them with tears and arguments that they had all been deceived by the false demon; as it was impossible that she, who had served them so well in her early years, could now be a terror to them: that she was now more wretched than then, as she corresponded less to God's grace. Thus did she explain it to these

astonished people, and to those of Cortona, who, soon informed of it, congratulated her upon the event.

But there was none who gave any credit to these sentiments of hers but herself, and she thought worse of herself even than she said; whence she one day received from the very mouth of her Jesus this most singular encomium: "O vial full of the odor of humility, in this is thy humility unlike that of other votaries of this virtue, that it does not appear as great to the eyes of others as it is truly in your own." On another occasion to some humble expressions which she used, he replied: "Thou keepest saying, O my daughter, that I have chosen thy soul from among all other creatures in the abyss of this world, as the vilest of all. I have done it that the little may become great, and sinners just, and what is vile and detestable, precious and rich in my mercy."

No less gloriously, and with less affliction did Margaret expel the evil spirits from a possessed girl at the same town of San Sepolcro. This girl was held before her by six strong men, and while she kept her eyes obstinately turned away from Margaret, God revealed to her that it was his absolute will that the girl should be freed, and appear to all to be freed, by her

prayers. Unable to oppose this irrevocable declaration, she nevertheless executed it as her humility prompted; and that suggested that she should place the child on the platform of the altar and retire to her cell to pray, hoping that the secrecy of her prayer might conceal its power; but the devils who felt its force publicly, angrily declared that they fled from that body, cast out by Margaret's prayers. Oh! may she drive them from all our hearts! "Save thy servants hoping in thee."

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## CHAPTER II.

### HER AUSTERITIES.

LIKE the low estimate in which she held herself for faults still possible, was the harsh treatment which Margaret gave herself: the frightfulness of penance having no fairer mother than humility, which is no less fruitful in self-depreciation than in self-chastisement. She longed more to martyrize her body with ill-treatment, than a miser does for gold, as Father Giunta expresses it; hence, from her first arrival in Cortona, she, by a severe prohibition, deprived

her palate of all taste of meat, all relief of wine; after some time she renounced also eggs and white meats, and all kinds of fish; restricting her sustenance to a hard crust of bread which she begged, to a few almonds, to some cheap fruits, but always excluding figs fresh or dry, never wishing to taste them for having eaten them too immoderately in her days of sin. This seeming indiscreet to a friend of Margaret, she obliged her one day to eat with her some boiled cabbage; although Margaret took but very little, she felt herself greatly reproved the next night by our Lord, who wished her to observe rigorously that universal and just law to afflict more with pain what had reveled most in delight. "Quantum in deliciis fuit, tantumdem date ei tormentum." That, without a direct command to the contrary by her Jesus, she should continue her total abstinence even from boiled herbs.

In pursuance of the war declared on her body, she proceeded to afflict it with armed scourges, with sharp cilices, with abridged sleep, and that either on the bare ground, or on hard boards, covered at best with a plain mat, with no pillow but a rough stone, or dry bundle of hard fagots. And as the disposition of her holy director, Father Giunta, was most penitent, she easily obtained his permission to use the disci-



pline till her arm fairly tired, to wear cilices till she fainted, to prolong her fasts till she fairly was expiring. Jesus compassionately intervened to prevent such indiscretion, and he told his now sinking penitent that such excesses did not please him, and that her confessor deserved every punishment for indiscreetly permitting them: that she should use restoratives for her enfeebled stomach, and a little wine mixed with water, and boiled herbs, but without any dressing. Rendered more cautious by this warning, Father Giunta recalled his permission, and thenceforward measured all by the discreet standard of the most benign heart of Jesus. Yet he had no little difficulty in restraining, within due limits, the fervent transports of his rigid penitent. In the very midst of her trying maladies, she begged him not to improve in the least her scanty food, nor alter her great rigor, saying, that she should never at any moment of her life make peace or truce with her body, which had been for so many years in open war with her God; and that her present languor was not such as to need either better food, or less severity.

On one occasion, when her prudent confessor, yielding neither to her entreaties, nor her arguments, thought to appease her by saying, that on the solemnity of the approaching Easter, she

should, to obey him, take a little oil to dress her ordinary boiled herbs. But soon repenting of this condescendence, as of excessive delicacy, she burst into a thousand reproaches against her body, calling it a crafty traitor, unworthy of belief, a malignant hypocrite, a crafty pretender of sickness and languor, to gain compassion and indulgence. And she said all this with such copious tears and deep sighs, that her body was more prostrated by such an excitement, than by all her austerities together. Hence, her confessor and the physicians, not to aggravate the evils, very frequently left her to the discretion of her beloved austerities. Badly nourished as she was, her trouble was the greater and more trying, as the hunger was more acute that urged her to relieve it. Having heard from her Jesus, that a soul could never be closely united to him, till it was first entirely disengaged from gluttony, she feared that her natural desire of necessary food was the hated vice: and if by no other means, she would overcome the sin by taking as little as possible of her unpalatable food. And with every mouthful of this, she breathed from her inflamed heart the most loving flames, which often made her forget her scanty meal, and absorbed her entirely in God. To be able to be united to him without restraint, she would

not permit any one in her cell at the time of the meal. Such austerity at last extinguished all taste in her palate, and so dried up all vigor in her body, that without a miracle, she could not have taken a step, or stood on her feet. Then our Lord, according to the promise already made, enjoined on her to use better sustenance. She used it most promptly, because she was sure of committing no gluttony, from her total insensibility to taste, now unable to distinguish her new and nourishing food from her former insipid herbs.

Even more than her external, did her internal penance unnerve and weaken her body. At every revolt of her rebellious passions, she repressed them with most violent contrary acts, till she was bathed in perspiration, wrung from her by the violence she did herself. And that no thought of hers should be an incentive to awaken these passions, she by a most painful effort ever kept her mind raised to God. The vocal prayers alone which she recited daily, were so many and so long, that Father Giunta was amazed how she could find time or breath to accomplish them. Unvaryingly, she every day said all the Canonical hours, and to each added forty *Our Fathers*, *Hail Marys*, and *Glory be to the Father*. She, moreover, went over all the mys-

teries of our Lord's passion, beginning with the washing of the feet, and in honor of each, recited the Lord's prayer ten times ; she recited as many more in reverence for each wounded limb of her Jesus, with such tender feelings of compassion, with such inflamed sighs, that by the very exhaustion of her soul she generally remained as faint and senseless as if actually dead. When instructed in the method of mental prayer, she began her meditation about midnight, and continued it uninterruptedly till *Nones*, when as before related she took her food ; but before attaining contemplation, a great part of her devout exercises consisted simply of *Pater Nosters*, but so many that they exceeded a thousand.

She said three hundred in honor of the Holy Trinity ; one hundred for the great Mother of God ; a hundred for each of the kindred most venerated by her ; one hundred for her sins ; a hundred for the Franciscan order ; a hundred for the people of Cortona ; a hundred for those who injured her ; and many hundreds more for the Sovereign Pontiff, for all ecclesiastical orders, for sinners, heretics, schismatics, Turks and Jews. And for all these various intentions she continued through life to pray ardently, at least once a day, yet with a great variety of interior feelings ; for in praying for all these different

classes, she felt her heart inundated with heavenly sweetness and vigor, which was, however, strikingly less when she prayed for the Jews.

In all these prayers, the words that she uttered with her lips were exceeded by the tears that fell from her eyes, moistening her garments, bathing the floor, and so weakening the body, that she often seemed unable to go to church, or return home from it. This gift of tears our Lord bestowed upon her in the beginning of her conversion, when he excited that great contrition in her heart; and as this continued most vehement in her soul, so too continued her copious tears; and though before others she endeavored to restrain herself, yet the vehemence of her regret overcame every barrier; with this fruit, that all who saw her weep, were moved more to detest their own sins than to compassionate her: Margaret's tears serving to render her a mirror of sinners and fisher of souls.

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### CHAPTER III.

#### HER CHARITY TO HER NEIGHBOR.

IT has ever been the mark of the saints to be as compassionate towards others, as they are

merciless to themselves. And as Margaret's harshness against herself exceeded all ordinary bounds, so her love of her neighbor was restricted within no usual limits. On hearing frequently enjoined by the lips of Jesus, his strict precept: "This is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another;" she said that there was nothing more pleasing to him than this, and was inflamed with fraternal love, like her beloved Magdalene. Her naturally affectionate disposition, as we remarked in the first chapter, had, even in her years of sin, ever inclined her to feel for, and relieve the wants of others, adopting for herself the beautiful boast of Job: "From my infancy mercy grew up with me, and it came forth with me from my mother's womb." Job xxxi. 18. But grace greatly extended and exalted the charitable instincts of nature.

When she began to beg, she distributed among the poor the most and best of what she received: emboldened by her charity, they annoyingly followed her as children would a mother, and in crowds besieged her hut, without her displaying any feeling, but that of regret at her inability to give to their insolent and pertinacious demands; and she soon gave so much that she had actually

nothing to give. The poor furniture with which the two countesses had fitted up her first hut, she gave away in charity ere many days: remaining without a pot to boil water, without a board to lie on. Nay, she was often left without even the single crust reserved for her own nourishment. She was so sensitive to cold, that even in summer she needed fire; yet in the depth of winter, in the severest times, she often remained without any, giving the poor her stock of wood, and even that actually on her own fire. She even went so far once, as to give a poor shivering creature some of the rafters of the roof, wherewith to warm himself.

Her neighbors, aware of the utter destitution to which her lavish charity to the needy often reduced her, in their merciless craving, resorted even to violence to drive them from her door, but with little profit. For, assailing her in the street, or even in church, they actually robbed her of all she had. She often on these occasions came back with no sleeves to her robe, no veil to her head, no cords, beads, or marks in her breviary. To several friars this seemed excess, and at their instigation her confessor one day reproved her; but taking up her crucifix, she justified herself by His example, who was so liberal that he had not where to lay his head

and gave every drop of his blood for us. Jesus excused her still better by an express command. One cold winter she lay grievously ill, with no covering but a simple tunic given her shortly before as an alms. Jesus revealed to her, that there was then in a neighboring city, a poor father, burthened with his little family, all shivering with cold and dying of hunger, without any hope of human aid. At this announcement, Margaret suddenly forgot her pain, and intent on relieving the misery of those hapless sufferers, she eagerly asked her God, what she could do to relieve them. He replied, "Send them that very tunic;" Margaret instantly obeyed, and wrapping herself in a torn quilt belonging to her companion, she remained the more joyful as she had rendered herself more naked by charity.

Whoever visited her in these, and her other frequent infirmities, soon discovered that to make her forget her own cruel sufferings, there was no better means than to speak of the misfortunes of others; for judging in her great compassion the evils of others to be greater than her own, she lost sight of herself, and was entirely taken up in seeking means to relieve them. Her confessor, practicing this course one day, was suddenly interrupted by her with these stupendous



expressions: "Oh Father! if I could relieve the hunger and nakedness of so many poor creatures, how happy should I be! Fain would I assume all their afflictions and calamities in order to exempt them. Ah! teach me some means of consoling this desire, which afflicts me so much." And she really assumed no small part of their afflictions and calamities. Besides the means already described, she had two others for their relief. On certain solemnities, but especially on that of her beloved protector Saint John the Baptist, she received into the house given her by the Signora Diobella all the needy of the city and district, and treated them to a good meal prepared for them with her own hands out of the alms which she had gathered for that purpose the whole year. This same house she also converted into a refuge for the forsaken sick, whom she nursed night and day with more than a mother's care, attending them with more than a slave's punctuality. She cleansed with her own hands the fetid ulcers of some, the leprous scales of others. The piety of the Cortonese, encouraged by these examples, enlarged this house into a convenient hospital under the title of the "Misericordia."

But far beyond her desire for the relief of the body, was her fervent charity for the salvation

of souls. How much this was promoted by her in prayer, how much she contributed by action, we have intimated in the preceding chapter and in the twelfth of the first Book. Yet we must add, that all these undertakings of Margaret's did not quench the thirst for our souls which preys upon our Jesus. To excite her still more to labor for the conversion of sinners, he more than once thus grieved with her: "Men cease not to replace me constantly on the cross, and thou dost not think constantly of diminishing the crucifiers; and to enjoy thy beloved solitude, thou leavest me to writhe beneath their blows. Hell constantly robs me of so many souls, and thou, rather than forego thy sweet contemplation, dost see me deprived of souls so dear to me. Ah! run quickly, and by thy example show all that I am that compassionate Father who welcomes back his most rebellious and contumacious children."

On the feast of the apostles, Saint Peter and Saint Paul, Jesus obliged her to send for a priest to warn him of the evil life he led. He came with any feeling but compunction, but she admonished him with such fervor of spirit, and efficacy of words suited to the occasion, as her zeal dictated. But as her expressions had none of her usual gentleness and mildness, she afterwards fell into

the greatest scruples, and full of grief and confusion asked pardon of her Jesus. He appeared and composed her mind, telling her that she had not been guilty of any excess in that point, but that she had indeed committed another fault, which had greatly displeased him, and for which he wished to rebuke her severely. The defect was, that having resolved to keep secret the admonition given to the priest, she broke her resolution, and confided to some others all that had passed. At this rebuke from her Jesus, she did not lose heart and abandon him, as pusillanimous souls do; but she humbled herself, repented, and so obtained full pardon. As the holy king David obtained it, when he said, "I will confess, against myself, my injustice before the Lord, and thou hast forgiven the iniquity of my sin."

She became thenceforward so circumspect, not only in revealing, but in observing and believing the defects of others, that when asked or advised by others she always answered, "That christian simplicity sees not, humility believes not, and charity reveals not his neighbor's defects."

Even when our Lord would begin to deplore the sins of men, she, unable to deny them, endeavored at least to diminish and exculpate them, reminding him of the deceit and of the temptations of the devil, as well as of the weakness of

human nature, and finally appealing to his infinite mercy. Thus, while Margaret was once beseeching him not to permit so many thousand souls redeemed by him to perish in hell, he sternly replied, that their rejection of his calls was so scornful, their abuse of his grace so obstinate, that his vengeance required that he should hurl his bolts of extermination in their midst: and as if about to execute his threat, he showed his hand grasping the avenging lightning. She interceded with all her power, and at last cried to her God, *Mercy*, so efficaciously, that he laid aside the instruments of his judgment, and assured her that however malignant and perverse sinners might be, if they returned to him, he would forget their excesses: "If the wicked man shall do penance of all his sins, I will no longer remember his iniquities which he has wrought," as he had already declared through Ezechiel.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### HER LOVE FOR JESUS CHRIST.

HERE, indeed, I despair of saying what justice demands, and am certain of telling only what is

true. As there is no conception that is not verified by Margaret's ardent love for our Saviour Jesus Christ, so there is no expression to convey it sufficiently. The mere motives common to all, but so deeply felt by her, of God becoming our Saviour, would have sufficed to lead her to love him above all things: and who can tell to what a point so many motives peculiar to her, exalted her love for her compassionate, confiding, liberal Redeemer? A single one of his benign apparitions would have sufficed to inebriate her with love for him; how much more must so many loving, familiar, continued apparitions have inebriated her--apparitions in which she saw and heard him more frequently than she saw her confessor? To what extent they inebriated her every one of the following shows.

No name was more frequent on her lips than that of her Jesus: with this she began every conversation, with this she blended it, with this she concluded it: she could not pronounce it without her face kindling, without shedding tears. Whoever sought to recall her from her languor, had but to pronounce with affection the name of Jesus: and who would see her rise suddenly into a most joyful ecstasy, needed only to begin devoutly to speak of her Jesus; for after a few sentences she would be rapt out of herself, ex-

claiming, panting with love, "Oh my dear Jesus, whose power has recalled me to grace, whose blood has redeemed me, whose love has united me to thee by the bonds of an indissoluble charity."

Her mind was ever revolving the life spent on earth by her Jesus. Her meditations, though they began with a most humble reverence to the Holy Trinity, and a loving invocation of the Blessed Virgin, with her other patrons, comprised then all his mysteries. She began by his Nativity and went over each down to his Ascension, an exercise much praised by Jesus himself, as most pleasing to him and salutary to us. On days, however, dedicated by the Church to a more definite remembrance of any special mystery, she dwelt more particularly on that. One Christmas she as vividly represented to herself the birth of her Jesus, as if she beheld with her eyes the beautiful child: but at the tender and joyful imagination, she, contrary to her wont, felt hard and disconsolate. This feeling was no less unwonted than stupendous and painful. Her astonishment ceased, however, when she heard the reason given by her Jesus. He told her that she was to be singularly like to him; and as his moans and other external pains began on that day, so too it became her to moan and suffer on

that day in imitation of him—a lesson that rebukes the temerity of those who aspire to solemnize the mysteries of a suffering Lord, only with the joyful exultations of glad Thabor.

On Holy Saturday, all absorbed in the contemplation of the death and burial of her Jesus, he enkindled in her heart feelings like those of Magdalene on that occasion. In imitation of her, frantic with grief, she now inveighed against the cruel men who had crucified him, now mourned with him that he had allowed himself to be so treated: then running breathless and in tears through the streets, she begged all to give her tidings of her crucified God—a question which moved all to compunction, for they knew the source from which it sprung. This she continued till Easter-day, not even relaxing then her dolorous woe; and suddenly overpowered by it, while Father Giunta was preaching in the church, she interrupted him excitedly, and with a loud voice asked him whether he at least could not give her some information of her dead Jesus. This unseasonable question greatly surprised the people no less than the preacher; but the latter discerning the Divine Spirit that filled her, carried away with it too, replied prophetically, that in a little while her risen Lord would come to inform her—a promise that during the rest of

the sermon kept in calm that loving heart. But this very love renewing her agitation, she returned to her frantic state, her sighs, her lamentations, and so continued all that day and the next night, till the dawn of day ; when the risen Sun at last appeared joyful and glorious, and after a long colloquy sweetly told her that her endeavors to find him had not yet reached the greater ones employed by Magdalene.

Her daily endeavor had but one object, to become a living copy of her Jesus ; and seeing that from the first moments of his mortal life he had chosen as his inseparable companions extreme poverty, excruciating pain, contempt, and opprobrium, she too, to imitate him, desired even to be attended by this sad company. As poverty depended entirely on her own choice, she resolved to feel every hard effect ; so that her pitying Angel Guardian once corrected her for her indiscretion. She despoiled her cell till she left not a stool to rest upon, a board to sleep on, nor a particle of covering ; and this generous self-privation which she practiced by distributing all to the poor, was not so much an instinct of compassion to relieve the suffering, as a desire to liken herself the more to her most poor Jesus.

There were devout persons, who, seeing her so neglectful of her wants, resolved to provide for



her, and by their abundant aid make war on her poverty; but she avoided it, either by not receiving into her house their charitable gifts, or by at once sending them as an alms to those more destitute than herself. And she so persisted, pleaded so well, that Father Giunta at last revoked the order given by him to a pious lady to provide her daily with her ordinary food; for she was bent on living like any other poor outcast, trusting solely to Divine Providence.

She panted for pain and opprobrium as so many relics consecrated by the touch of her Jesus; and the more she obtained of him, the more in her thirst she implored. But we have already spoken of this and will return to it again, as well as show by particular instances her prompt generosity in fulfilling the most difficult command enjoined upon her: ever keeping her hand ready for the work as a proof of the loyal love of the heart: *Probatio dilectionis exhibitio est operis*, as the great Pope Saint Gregory says.

The very saints in heaven were dear to her only as they held her Jesus dear; and the more they had prized him the dearer they were to her. This was the motive of her burning love for Mary: this the attraction of that special tender devotion to all the Holy Family, to Saint Mary Magdalene, to the holy apostles, Saint Peter,

Saint Paul, and Saint John, and the other saints whom we will enumerate. To her devotion, not less than to that of the fervent Saint Bernard, "all food of the soul is dry, if not moistened with this oil; insipid, if not seasoned with this salt. If you write, I relish it not unless I read Jesus there; if you dispute or instruct, I like it not unless Jesus sounds there. Jesus is honey in the mouth, melody in the ear, joy in the heart." Her very corporeal life, according to its different relations to the love of Jesus, was now joyful, now sorrowful. She desired death to be able to love him more ardently in heaven: she rejoiced to live to dispose herself to love him eternally with more ardor in heaven; and whether she desired to die or rejoiced to live, she had naught in view but to transform herself more and more into her Jesus, the sole object of her love, the only aim of her sighs, the only centre of all her satisfaction, to whom she was so closely bound, that like Saint Paul she frequently repeated: "That neither death, nor life, nor Angels, nor Principalities, nor Powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor strength, nor height, nor depth, nor any creature can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Jesus once asked her: "If on a dark night thou stoodest alone in a solitary wood, infested

by ferocious beasts, the haunt of fierce robbers, I should call thee to me, how wouldst thou come amidst these horrors?" "Not only would I come to thee," she replied, "but I would fly to thee like a loving child, who rushing too swiftly to the bosom of the beloved mother that calls it, falls and faints; and if on falling I should weep, I should merely weep that I do not reach thee more quickly."

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## CHAPTER V.

### HER DEVOTION TO THE PASSION OF CHRIST.

EQUAL to the love of her most inflamed heart for Jesus, was the affectionate compassion for his sufferings; revealed as clear to her enlightened mind with the attractives of the one, the incentives of the other. In the beginning of her conversion, the crucifix alone was the only book suggested to her by the Holy Ghost, afterwards confirmed by a special command of Jesus himself, in which she was to learn at once those two most opposite excesses, God's love for her and her ingratitude to God.

With the first glance which she fixed upon it,

she learned them so vividly that she inflamed Father Giunta, already moved by the facts related in the first book, with intense love of God and hatred of self. Fain would she have pined away in loving, and died to avenge him. And to avenge him she was not satisfied with the scalding tears that constantly streamed from her eyes, nor with the bitter repentance that wasted away her heart; she wished to shed blood for him who had shed so much for her sake, and open as many wounds in her body as her faults had opened in him. Hence from the first the sight of the crucifix led her to pitiless austerities against herself; she tore her garments, she rent her hair, she beat herself with her clenched hands, she bruised herself with stones, she scourged herself with ropes, she smote herself with iron rods, as each came readiest to her hand. As she spent all Friday in regarding more fixedly her outraged God, so she spent it in more harshly treating herself; and this, she said, ought to be the practice of every Christian on that day.

But as she wounded herself from head to foot, seeming to herself not to suffer what a just return to him required, she besought him to equal her pains to his. And he, who desired naught but to make her a perfect copy of his own Passion, often consoled her by a liberal communica-

tion of his sufferings. This happened once publicly. Jesus once commanded her that she should pass the whole of the next day in the church of the friars; and having obtained her confessor's consent, she was fulfilling it intent on understanding and compassionating the pains of her Crucified Love, and her compassion reached such a degree as to approach that experienced by the Mother of dolors at the foot of the cross. With soul and body rent by such bitter grief, she burst forth into deep sighs, and copious tears, and saddest exclamations. Her face grew pale, and she was about to fall faint and lifeless, when some pious ladies ran up at her cry, and while they supported her in their arms her pain at heart increased, and with it the pallor of her countenance; she inclined her head and seemed to breathe her last sigh.

And so she was supposed to be really dead by all around; the sad news soon spread through the city, and crowds of the people flocked to the church to verify it; all deemed her dead, and all bitterly deplored her loss. When Vespers sounded she was seen to move slightly, and a little after, with eyes fixed on heaven, was heard joyfully thanking her Jesus for having made her experience in soul and body such a martyrdom. But this joy soon gave place to

another martyrdom no less afflicting to her humility ; for returning to the use of her senses, and seeing herself surrounded by such a crowd of spectators, she was ready to die for confusion.

But nevertheless she still thirsted and panted for a greater participation in her crucified Lord's sufferings. If he allowed her to suffer by disease, be harassed by demons, persecuted by men with vile insults, infamous words, cruel abandonment, it was only to appease her thirst for partaking in every form of the pains of his body, the anguish of his soul, the wrong done his good name. So he attested more than once, and more than once did she thank him for it.

One Saturday in the beginning of August, discovering in a clearer light the great merit of ever living beside the cross of Christ, a devout impulse led her to ask her beloved Magdalene why she had yielded on Calvary to the fury of those executioners, and allowed them to remove her in the least from that blessed cross ; protesting that if she had been opposed by all the monsters of hell, she would not have feared and so lost that dear post, but would rather have let them take her life and tear out her soul.

Whenever she saw any body more suffering, or heart more afflicted than her own, full of impatience lest others in that way should get nearer

to the cross of her Jesus, she complained disconsolately to him, protesting that she wished to feel united in herself all the evils scattered in other men; because as she more than all the rest had fastened him to the cross by her sins, she more than all the rest should alone approach nearest to his cross. A protest that, one day after Epiphany, she thus confirmed: "I am ready, O Lord, to swear, if thou permittest, that during all my life I care not ever to enjoy any consolation of the spirit; for I desire ever to feel my heart sad and disconsolate like thine." Then turning to the Blessed Virgin, she said, "Mother of my Lord, it is true, that I am not worthy even to raise my eyes to thy Son, crucified for me; but yet he has so ravished my affections that I cannot stop until I am perfectly united to him. Ah! divide his great pains with me, and grant that I may ever bitterly bewail them with thee."

The Son and mother heard her promptly, so that she remained more than usual in her regular meditation on the Passion, which she prolonged from midnight till *Prime*; and during the whole time she experienced in her heart the sadness, and in her body the pains, of her suffering Jesus, and of dolorous Mary, with such intense sentiments of compassion, that actual tears of blood streamed

from her eyes, as many eye witnesses attest happened on other occasions also. To promote in her this sentiment of compassion and these bloody tears, Jesus appeared to her all wounded, assuring her, that while she clung to his cross, he would shower on her graces as plenteous as the blood that he shed upon the cross, and that she would have obtained still more abundantly had she approached nearer in mind and heart to him on the cross; concluding that his Passion and wounds were the shortest path to attain perfection, the most potent shield to ward off every javelin of hell; that she should enter upon it, and hide herself secure in his wounds, and penetrate more into his side.

To animate her still more, he appeared to her one day, as it were crucified, inviting her to touch his wounds with her hands; an invitation from which in her humility she shrunk, declaring herself most unworthy to look upon and still more to touch even the nails. He renewed it with expressions of love; then taking his hands from the cross, he opened his side to show her his wounded heart, saying, that he kept her ever engraven there, and that she should enter freely as into her own secure and stable asylum. Desirous of this, Margaret breathed from her soul such ardent sighs that her very soul seemed



wafted on them, leaving her body faint and motionless, while she was absorbed in a most joyful ecstasy. Two things especially we know that her Jesus taught her: one that his wounds were the source of all the blessings of Christianity, to which she should recur for all she might need for her own advantage or that of others; and the other that the love of Mary, his mother, was so inflamed, that to be likened to him, and save the human race, she would most readily have been crucified beside him.

As these two lessons increased in Margaret a zeal for souls, so it inflamed anew her devotion to her crucified Lord; towards whom she multiplied her acts of devotedness, and increased her love, so that she not only lived nailed with him to the cross, but even desired to die crucified with him. Our Saviour once asked her: "Daughter, dost thou really love me?" "Ah! Lord," she replied, "no, I do not love thee as I desire." "And how dost thou desire to love me?" "To love thee so much as to die of pure compassion for thy sufferings." "But I can so sweeten such a death, that thou wilt expire of joy and not of pain." "Ah no, Lord, I wish it not so sweetened, but full of bitterness like thine." "Wouldst thou be content to die like my Apostle Andrew?" "Oh I would die how and when it pleases thee,

but let my executioner be compassion for thee crucified for my sake." Then our Lord asked, "whether she wished to experience what he endured in the bloody sweat in Gethsemane." But she, who wished to try them all, could make no reply to the offer of a single one. But he assured her, that it was so fearful that human mind could never conceive, much less feel it in sympathy.

Having received communion on the feast of St. Mark, she beheld a cross coming to her. She at once extended her hands and feet to fit herself to it, and in fact laid herself on it as if crucified, but then seeing that she was not, she said mournfully to her Jesus, who then appeared to her nailed on his cross: "Ah! Lord, why can I not be nailed to the cross like thee?" "Thy nails," he replied, "shall be the continual troubles which shall pierce thee, and which thou shalt henceforth welcome the more gladly, magnanimously rivaling my Apostle, who exultingly says: I will glory in my infirmities."

He animated her still more to this on the feast of Saint Mary Magdalene, when he appeared to her as he rose, showing Magdalene his five wounds, ruddy with fresh blood, saying, that if she loved him as much as she asserted, she would still constantly bear every blow and torment.

To increase to this point Margaret's tenderness and compassion for the Crucified One, the holy angels also co-operated by a rebuke. One day after the feast of the Prince of the Apostles, two of them appeared to her, full of exultation at having driven from the air a dense storm cloud of malignant spirits, and while they related the fierce conflict that they had had, she saw before her eyes a luminous circle, within which was another angel, as it were, crucified; and she, not understanding this mystery, asked of them an explanation, and she was at once answered by one of them: "If thou hadst a son thus wounded, wouldst thou not be busied night and day around him, healing his wounds and alleviating his sufferings? And yet thou dost not for thy Lord Jesus, so wounded for thee." This reproof wounded her deeply; and she ceased to profit by it only when she ceased to live. That we may adopt that amendment of life, so much more incumbent on us as our guilt is greater, oh! may she enkindle in our hearts at least one spark of her great love for Jesus crucified.

*Juxta crucem tecum stare,  
Te libenter sociare,  
In planctu desidero.  
Fac me vere tecum flere;  
Crucifixo condolere,  
Donec ego vixero.*

Let me mingle tears with thee  
Mourning Him who mourned for me,  
All the days that I may live ;  
By the cross with thee to stay ;  
There with thee to weep and pray ;  
Is all I ask of thee to give.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### HER DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED SACRAMENT.

No other benefit rendered her Jesus so dear to Margaret, as that of the most august Sacrament ; because by this most stupendous gift alone, she saw her worst pains removed, and her greater joys conferred. Her inconsolable grief sprang solely from knowing, that she was no less full of obligations to God, than incapable of corresponding to them : now she knew by faith that, by virtue of this gift, she paid not only fully, but exorbitantly, all her debts to God ; “ in Him we are all made rich,” as the Apostle Paul says. Words cannot express how this consideration inflamed her heart to Jesus, who had enriched her at such an expense.

One day there rose before her mind all the immense titles, which the Almighty has to supreme

honor from us, and the fire of her most obedient heart burned with a thousand desires : fain would she have possessed all hearts to pay him a tribute proportioned to his love, to possess every life so as to sacrifice all to him in satisfaction for her faults, when she heard an interior suggestion that she paid a greater homage to God by a single Mass ; because by means of that divine victim sacrificed for her, she offered God an infinite honor, of which he is worthy, rendered him an infinite thanksgiving which he deserved, paid him an infinite satisfaction, greater than his outraged justice can exact. Reviewing this as most certain and undoubted by the light of faith, as it afforded her unspeakable consolation, so she studiously profited by it, hearing every day, for all these ends, all the masses celebrated at the church of her friars, and assisting also in intention at all those celebrated throughout the whole world, particularly in the sanctuaries of the Holy Land.

The Holy Land was always the object of her desire, and to be able there to imprint her kisses on that happy land, consecrated by the tears of her Jesus, bathed with his sweat, sanctified by his blood ; but then reminded by faith, that in the Catholic Church she had her Jesus, not passing and transitory as in Palestine, but stable and

permanent, oh! how she melted, she rejoiced. Never did Christian pilgrim exult with such gladness, or rejoice with devotion, at the sight of those sanctuaries, as Margaret when near the venerated Ciborium; after remaining there as near as possible motionless in body, she kept her heart fixed upon him to bless, love, and thank the great Divine guest. There she ever seemed to hear from his lips that loving invitation: "Come to me all ye that labor and are heavy burthened, and I will refresh you." She recurred to it in all her troubles, with it she relieved all her bitterness, she consulted it in her doubts, she implored help in her difficulties; and to obtain it surely, she offered him in intention all the honor, reverence, supplications, made constantly to him by the attendant angels, with whom she protested that she was ever united, substituting them in her stead to honor him in the tabernacles.

But her greatest delight was to receive within herself this Divine guest; and to this reception she brought that train of heroic virtues, with which her beloved Magdalene received him in her own house; and like her, she ever derived the greatest fruits. His richest gifts, his most intimate colloquies, his most loving expressions, Jesus bestowed at the time of Communion, when he invariably raised her into a most joyful ees-

tasy, and admitted her to so sublime an understanding of the divine secrets, that, as Jesus once expressed it, they would never be understood by men, nor ever known. Being sick once on the octave of a feast of Our Lady, her good Fathers carried Communion to her; and she, hearing it, conceived such joy, that, in spite of her excruciating pain, she broke forth in a long and most sweet laughter, which her Lord, when she had received him, increased, saying: "As thou art weak and afflicted with evils, rest your head on the pillow, and thus supported, hear me. Thou art my little plant, planted by me in the garden of my love, that is, the order of thy Blessed Francis: a new gift is granted thee by my Father, whereby thou, little plant, shalt bud forth new branches, and extend over all; whence waters of mercy may flow sufficient to irrigate the dry plants of the world.

Such delicious joy saddened greatly her excessive humility. She had often heard her Jesus inculcate the cleanness of heart required by him in whoever went to receive him in his Sacrament, and thinking herself all unclean and defective she often kept aloof. She was accustomed to confess daily; but when Father Giunta was not at hand, she confessed to a priest less confiding and more repulsive, but as withal she

did not seem to attain due cleanness of heart, she durst not communicate; and though Father Giunta urged her nevertheless to receive, she very often refused, and refused in this only.

While thus reluctant, her Jesus often showed himself, appearing visibly to encourage her to feed on his flesh, calling her his Daughter, or his Beloved, or Immaculate Soul. Ever resolute and desirous of being united, he often obliged her by an express command to sit down at that blessed Table, and at last even to receive daily. The humble Saint yielded at last, and notwithstanding the reluctance of her ever timid humility, she enjoyed the delight of daily welcoming her Jesus in his Sacrament.

Her preparation was long, beginning in her cell at midnight, and continuing in the church till near mid-day; yet it was less long than fervent and devout; for, as she was wont to say, the streets through which the body of Jesus passed should be paved with the purest gold, that that sacred Body might thus be honored by us and welcomed, as much as it was slighted and maltreated by the impious Jews. This honor and reverence towards him was, she said, precisely one of the principal aims of the institution of that great Sacrament. Hence, though she communicated with such good dispositions, she was



seized in that action with such great fear that she trembled in every limb, so that those near ran up to support her. She wondered herself and grieved at such alarm; but Jesus said that if the angels trembled out of respect in his presence, it behoved her to tremble.

She performed various outward acts for greater reverence: she took the veil off her head, she put a rope around her neck, and approached all bathed in most devout tears; but unwilling to be observed by others, she was accustomed to communicate in a retired spot, and after the High Mass.

One morning however, on a feast of the Blessed Virgin, her desire for Communion increased so much, that, beside herself and unconscious of the great number present, she burst into most piteous and inflamed ejaculations, praying and obtaining of her confessor permission to receive before the usual time. Nor could her desire but be most vehement, while she so frequently heard from the lips of Jesus himself, singular encomiums of that Divine Food, and the special fruits which it produced in those who worthily receive it.

She often bewailed, with her Jesus, the irreverence continually offered him by ungrateful Christians; but as this lamentation always in-

flamed her with zeal against the irreverent, it, at the same time, awoke her fear, that she might be included among them; and, while she once detested their irreverence with excessive grief, she heard her Jesus rebuke her in these sharp words: "Thy excessive lamentation and bewailing of thy imperfections offend me with real venial sins; it is enough to accuse thyself in confession, and then remain in peace and receive the Sacrament." Beautiful declaration for devout, but timid souls, who not unfrequently, by too great self-torment for their faults, render themselves more defective and guilty, thus incurring the very fault that they abhor!

During the years of Father Giunta's absence from Cortona, she went to receive communion in the church of St. George, where she was often tempted to abstain, from seeing the Blessed Sacrament so irreverently handled by the undevout pastor; but Jesus would not consent, assuring her, that to enter her breast, he did not disdain to come into such hands, and that he deemed himself compensated by her reverence for the priest's ill-treatment: she accordingly received, no less for the comfort of her spirit than for the restoration of her body.

And in fact, if her body, exhausted by so many torments, afflicted by so many evils, maintained

withal sufficient strength for so many laborious undertakings, this, as all who conversed with her deemed, was rather an effect of that vital food, than of her most scanty nourishment. This was evident to all in the last days of her mortal life, when for nearly three weeks, she sustained life, though receiving no food, but simply Holy Communion. Hence, that stupendous freedom from corruption, with which her fair and fragrant body has been preserved for over four centuries, was clearly a fruit of that Divine Sacrament, instituted, as the Angelic Doctor says, to give life to the body also, prolonging by its power the days of her passible life, and eternalizing those of her glorious life, according to the promise of our Saviour: "I have come, that they may have life, and have it more abundantly. The bread which I will give, is my flesh, for the life of the world. Whoso eateth this bread, shall live forever." Let him then who aspires to enjoy his bodily strength, and pass prosperously and in health the days of his corruptible, earthly life, use more devout communions and less ease and delight.

## CHAPTER VII.

## HER DEVOTION TO MARY.

LOVE for Mary is so blended with love of Jesus in every Christian heart, that the increase of one is an expansion of the other. As no human tongue can ever express Margaret's love for Jesus, so it cannot attain her love for Mary. Although Jesus himself was the instructor and master of Margaret in all virtues, he inculcated none more earnestly than love for his beloved Mother. To enkindle her love still more, he frequently showed how she is now the August Queen of heaven. One day after communion Margaret heard from Jesus: "My daughter, I wish thee every day to pay some special reverence to my Mother, and to endeavor to the best of thy power, to cause her to be revered, and honored by others also: she being most worthy of all honor." And with similar expressions he usually concluded his most confidential colloquies, which he daily had with her. Surely, a single command of her Jesus would have sufficed to inflame Margaret with love for the most loathsome monster; how much must she have been inflamed, by his express and reiterated commands, towards an object in

comparably more amiable than any other created being?

One day while she was in prayer, Jesus appeared to her with this most gracious offer: "My daughter, behold, I give and show thee my Mother." And immediately the Blessed Virgin stood before her in a majestic and beautiful form. From so radiant a sight the humble Margaret soon diverted her gaze, declaring in her admiration, that she was too impure for the fair Mother of purity to deign to visit. Jesus so approved her admiration, that he soon broke forth into this expression: "My daughter, my Father loves thee, and my Mother also loves thee; and thou art worthy to enjoy more fixedly her countenance. Look then on my Mother who bears thee especial love."

Another time she was borne in ecstasy towards a most splendid throne environed by the noblest Seraphim, who supported their great Queen seated on it. Margaret blushed to see herself so elevated, and sweetly complained to her Jesus. He replied that he had raised her up, so that she might, with greater familiarity and confidence, gaze upon his Mother. Then Margaret prostrated herself at the feet of the Blessed Virgin, and told her that Jesus alone was the author of her temerity, and that he had transported her

thither. "And I," replied Mary, "I welcome thee as my daughter, and as such I shall ever keep thee commended earnestly to God." At this loving welcome, at this ample promise of Mary's, Margaret did not expire of joy; either because her spirit was then separated from the body, or because, if it was united to the body, it was united to heaven, where death has no power to separate.

She continued long thus in colloquy with Mary, by whose words she felt inexpressibly consoled, so that she deplored her having never, till then, tasted the sweet comfort of her conversation; assigning as a reason that she had, till that day, been ever immersed and lost in her dear Jesus. Then Mary said to her: "My daughter, who seeks my beloved Son, seeks me also; and who possesses him, possesses me also." Margaret understood the full meaning of these words: hence, the better to find Mary, she sought Jesus the more earnestly, and sought to attain Jesus, the better to possess Mary, convinced that no other homage would be so pleasing to Mary, as a love for Jesus, constantly increasing in fervor. And in this persuasion, Mary confirmed her more clearly in another radiant apparition, when, as Margaret implored her to obtain every powerful aid for her sinful soul, as she called it, Mary, with a smiling and loving countenance, re-

plied: "I receive thee and thy prayers, with most special affections, for the great love thou bearest my Son."

But Jesus was not satisfied with this mere reverence for his Mother: hence, he frequently enjoined upon her to repeat the angelic salutation as far as the words, "Blessed is the fruit of thy womb." She did it frequently every day, and our most benign Lady corresponded with frequent graces, accustomed to repay the slightest reverence by the greatest favors, as St. Peter Damian says.\*

One day when she was excessively afflicted, her Guardian Angel comforted her by sweetly intoning the "Hail Mary," and such was the consolation that she would have wished to die, so as to soar with him to the presence of Mary, and continue forever in the company of the angels that reverent salutation. Hence, she asked her Guardian Angel how much of her exile still remained.

It lasted for years, and she compensated for their tedious length by exactly imitating the Angelic Spirits, in addressing Mary with greater reverence, and serving her more devoutly. And although this was her daily exercise, neverthe-

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\* *Maria, cum sit fidelissima, solet maxima pro minimis respondere.*

less, she endeavored to fulfil it better on days consecrated to her; when she bent her whole mind to contemplate Mary's greatness more at length, and her whole heart was inflamed with most ardent affection. But as the affections of her heart were not as great as she saw Mary's merits, hence, in compensation, she offered to Mary the love which she bore herself; and the better to supply her deficiencies, presented to her the still greater love borne her in our name by our common Surety, her Divine and only Son, Jesus. This exercise usually won for her a most gracious visit from the Son and the Mother.

Lying once in bed dangerously ill, she was terrified by the anguish of approaching death, and the rigors of the menacing judgment. Her confessor cheered her with the hope of having as her supporters in those trials the saints in heaven. At this word *heaven*, her heart was inundated with such joy, that she was suddenly rapt into a most joyful ecstasy, in which she beheld Mary earnestly imploring her Son to take her from all these dangers, and introduce her speedily into eternal repose, and Jesus granted all to his Mother. This sight not only banished all fear from her heart, but encouraged her to ask that very dreaded death, confident with St.



Ephrem, that "he will never hear the eternal *woe* for whom Mary has even once prayed."\*

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### HER DEVOTION TO THE ANGELS.

THE liberal condescension of Jesus and Mary to Margaret, gained her the most lavish favors from the angelic spirits. While she was praying at the usual hour, on the night before the feast of St. Clare, an exalted Seraph appeared, beautifully adorned with six splendid wings, and conversed long with her on spiritual matters; this so gladdened her that all that night she could not withhold her laughter; and it so inflamed her with love of God, that her radiant face and form seemed those of a Seraph: hence, on recounting the circumstance to her confessor, she begged him never to mention that blessed angel in public, because the very remembrance rekindled those outward flames, which she wished never to be seen or perceived by any living being.

The same Seraph, or another, appeared in the

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\* *Æternum vae non sentiet, pro quo vel semel oraverit Maria.*

same form, on the night of the second Sunday of Advent. Margaret seeing him with the hand raised in the act of blessing, called her companions, that they too might enjoy that angelic benediction; but although, when they came, they beheld nothing, she saw such great things as entirely to ravish her soul from her body, leaving it as if dead, in the arms of those astonished women: among whom happened to be Signora Isotta di Baciolla. That gracious Seraph left two gifts, greater fervor of charity in heart, and greater perspicacity of mind to understand the divine attributes, as Margaret's Angel Guardian informed her.

Their very prince, St. Michael, appeared to her frequently; among other occasions in the month of June, in the feast of SS. John and Paul, Jesus and Mary having appeared to her, escorted by most beautiful angels, she saw one more radiant than the rest; and having asked our Lord who he was, he replied that it was Saint Michael, prince of his heavenly court, most fervent of all in loving him, and consequently most disposed to receive and fulfil his orders. This very prerogative in loving her Jesus more ardently, and attending him more closely, rendered the holy angels extremely dear to Margaret, and venerated by her; she frequently invoked their names,

visited their altars, multiplied in their honor homage to God, violence to herself: and above all, she emulated their ardent charity, their candid affection.

One day considering this spotless candor, she asked her Jesus, who just then appeared, whether those most pure spirits withdrew from impure and wicked souls? He replied, that in spite of their great hatred to all obscenity, the angels nevertheless imitated his mercy; and as this never withdrew the aid of his grace from sinners to touch and amend them, so the angels never deprived sinners of their presence to bring them to penance, ill repaid as they so often were. Margaret was amazed at this constant love, and conscious of having for so many years enjoyed and betrayed them, she wept bitterly, and promised to correspond in future with the most exact fidelity to all their inspirations.

As she received most constant favors from her Angel Guardian, so she entertained the most tender affection for him. She had scarcely retired to her first hut in Cortona, when he began to appear visibly to her, and on her first colloquy with him during an unsuccessful night meditation, he encouraged her with the assurance that Jesus in his mercy had not only introduced her to the most sublime contemplation, but had also ad-

mitted her to the most confident intimacy with his sacred humanity—a promise that filled her with joy and strength. In a longer colloquy at Christmas, he explained minutely the loving devices by which God in his mercy had rescued her from the infernal wolf, and led her back to penance. The sanctifying grace given to justify her after her repentance and confessions, he styled the precious ring with which Jesus had espoused her, and so miraculous a ring that it may be compared to the stupendous rod of Moses; for as that wrought so many wondrous things against Egypt, so grace abiding in her effected all those prodigies of austerity, humility, and charity for the destruction of hell. To preserve and increase it, as well as to unite her more closely to God, and more generously to the cross, Margaret showed herself ready to obey, imploring his assistance and suitable vigor to correspond to a God so merciful and benign to her.

Margaret one day desired to be enabled to discern certainly the perfect friends and elect of God: her holy angel appeared, and she asked of him the true signs; he kindly replied that they were no other than to have the heart disengaged from all that is created, and fixed on God alone, to whom they should constantly as-

pire by most fervent affection ; and that the path to attain it was the constant exercise of virtue, especially of sincere humility and fervid charity towards our neighbors so dear to God. She accordingly trod that path which would lead her surely, and give her entrance into the blissful number of the elect. And he subsequently assured her that she had really entered it.

Margaret was most disconsolate at having spent several days without seeing her Jesus. Then his holy angel appeared to her and revealed to her most sublime things ; but as the knowledge of these did not bring that which she desired above all others, she interrupted him to ask him earnestly to fly to the throne of her Jesus, and beg him to deign to console her as before with his loved presence. This sudden act of love for Jesus surprised the very angel, and full of joy he a thousand times blessed his care of Margaret, and not only assured her that she would soon see her Jesus again on earth, but would soon see him eternally in heaven ; and then opened before her eyes the glorious book of the elect, showing her her own name inscribed there in letters of gold.

He bore her a like comfort at another time, when similarly afflicted. One Friday, just before the Feast of St. Thomas, while imploring with

tears the Divine aid, the holy angel appeared and after lovingly blessing her, promised her in the name of her Jesus, things so surpassing all human understanding, that she could not find words to express it to her confessor. But such great promises left her in the importunate fear, of losing the visible converse of her Jesus; sooner than be deprived of it, she declared herself ready to be deprived of any grace. Then the angel assured her that a favor enjoyed so specially by her, should not be withdrawn, because her benign Jesus delighted to converse with her in this affable and familiar way. At this promise her loving heart greatly exulted; but to damp her joy there arose her wonted fear of finally falling into some grievous sin, by which she would lose this and every other grace. Hence all trembling she earnestly prayed her Angel Guardian to obtain of God so painful a malady, that her pain would take from her body all material for offending God. Her Guardian Angel reassured her by reminding her of the promise made by Jesus; that grace would not only be constant in her, but increase to the day of her death; that she should leave therefore the direction of her body entirely to him, whether he wished it sick or well; saying this he was vanishing, when she anxiously implored

him to converse still with her, as she felt from his presence a more robust strength against the assaults of the devil. The good angel continued to converse with her, and finally departed blessing her and promising always to assist her with all vigilance, and to intercede for her with God. This promise he fulfilled so exactly, that as our Lord afterwards revealed to her, not an hour passed that he did not offer up supplications in her behalf.

In reward for the great trials which she underwent in effecting and concluding peace among the people of Cortona, her Guardian Angel appeared still more lovingly, assuring her from our Lord, that she should for some time enjoy here on earth the beatific joys of heaven. So exorbitant a promise afflicted instead of delighting her, it seeming incredible to her that God would deign to communicate himself to a soul as guilty as she reputed hers to be. Her by no means unfrequent and painful doubts were again excited, as to whether she was not deceived by demons transformed into angels of light. As on other occasions, so on this, her Guardian Angel took out the thorn from her heart, by giving her a true sign whereby to discern certainly a true from a false spirit, concluding his interview by saying: "The devils are instigators and

promoters of discord, not of peace, such as she enjoyed."

Then when heaven began to favor her with its visits, he instructed her how to act so as to distinguish true apparitions of saints, from deceitful ones of devils; saying that by a lively faith and sincere humility, she should accost them with this resolute greeting: "If thou art not my Lord Jesus Christ, true God and true man, or his Angel of light, I command thee in the name of Jesus of Nazareth to depart at once from me." And such were her first words on those occasions.

· This holy angel was not only solicitous to comfort her afflicted mind, but also showed himself eager to obtain relief for her prostrated body; frequently warned her against her indiscreet rigor; proposed suitable restoratives in her languors, and counselled her in her swoons to pray in a less tedious position, and support herself at least by means of a bench. And as Margaret implicitly followed all his suggestions, he always kept a loving watch and ward over her, "walking with her in all her ways, helping her in labor, protecting her when at rest, encouraging her in the struggle, and crowning her when the victory was won," as Saint Augus-



tine wrote on a similar occasion in his soliloquies.\*

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## CHAPTER IX.

## HER DEVOTION TO THE SAINTS.

NOR were the Saints less affectionate towards Margaret than the angels, Jesus frequently assuring her, that they interceded for her with special earnestness, desirous of having her in their company in heaven. These most revered by her, were those who had most revered her Jesus, and for whose veneration, he showed himself most desirous. Of his Foster Father, Saint Joseph, he said one day: "I wish thee every day to render some act of homage to my most loving Foster Father." Margaret had no difficulty in obeying; on the contrary, she felt her heart borne towards him, with an impetuous sympathy; recognizing in him special titles to the love of Jesus, whose life in childhood he had saved from the jealousy of Herod, and whom, as he grew up, he supported by his sweat and toil. Hence, she

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\**Ambulans cum ea in omnibus viis ejus, adjuvans laborantem, protegens quiescentem, adhortans pugnantem, coronans vincentem.*

distinctly revered his feet which had travelled so much to save Him, and his hands which had so labored for His support: his breast that had so often gratefully pillowed Him; and still more, his noble heart, the centre of such burning love for Him; and for her constant homage to the Saint, she asked no return but to be inflamed with love like his; which, in fact, he communicated to her.

She also bore a special affection to the great Precursor Saint John the Baptist, in consequence of all that he underwent to announce her Jesus to the people. But besides this, in her eyes, transcendent motive, two others had enkindled her most fervid devotion towards him. His was the first soul personally sanctified by her Jesus, and so sanctified that "there hath not arisen one greater than John the Baptist," and consequently the first soul yet conceived incomparably devoted to him. Besides, he preached penance, and practised it more than he preached. Beholding herself so special a favorite of Jesus, and desirous of corresponding with equal love, and equal penance, she chose him as her special advocate to obtain all this, and hourly implored his intercession. And he heard her so graciously, that our Lord said one day: "Praise Saint John the Baptist, O daughter, who prays constantly

for thee." Among other acts by which she honored him, we have already mentioned that it was her custom, on the Feast of his Nativity, to serve up a fine dinner to a great multitude of poor people, after having procured it chiefly by her own labor and dressed it with her own hands.

During the time that she had her son with her, from the very fact that she loved him tenderly, she feared to yield too much to nature, and be distracted too much from God, if she employed herself in services not actually indispensable. To avoid this danger, and not lose time in preparing him food, she set it before him badly dressed, and even raw; having agreed with him that he was to take in silence whatever was presented to him. But when she was to serve the poor for Jesus' sake, in reverence for his Saints, she spent day after day, sure of adhering more closely to God, as she was less following the impulses of nature.

Similar traits won her warmest affection for the three chief apostles, Peter, Paul, and John. In one of her familiar colloquies with Jesus, on penance, while grieving that she had begun it so late, he consoled her by saying, that her penance was late indeed, in point of time, but most prompt as regarded the fervor of her love. Surprised by a sudden impulse, she turned to Saint

Peter, exclaiming: "Apostle Peter, beloved of God, good reason hadst thou to say against those foolish men, who withdrew from Jesus: 'Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.' And had it pleased thee, my Jesus, that I were then present, animated by his example, I too would have adored thee constantly in company with thy faithful, loving Magdalene."

She very often had recourse to Saint Paul to obtain of him a conversion like his: and she solemnized with most affectionate homage the anniversary of that envied conversion; and one night after that Feast, conceiving more clearly the heroism of that magnanimous submission to the first words of his Saviour, Margaret, desirous of emulating it, showed her readiness for all that God might require of her by his words: "Lord! what wilt thou have me to do?" And this she repeated in every distressing accident, adding that of his most obedient and loving Mother Mary: "Behold the hand-maid of the Lord, may it be done unto me according to thy word." On tasting his ecstatic sweetness, she cried: "How true it is, O Apostle Paul, that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, what God hath prepared for those who love him!" No other expression of the Apostle was, however, more familiar to her

than this: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? neither life nor death, nor any creature," as related in the fourth chapter of this book.

To show the ardor of her love for Saint John, it will suffice to say, that he was the beloved disciple of our Lord, the first born adopted son of Mary: and frequently brought by them to visit her from heaven. And Margaret knowing, and being reminded by him in these visits, that he from the fact of his being better informed of the sentiments of the heart of Jesus, whenever he wrote or spoke, inculcated upon the faithful fraternal charity by the terms: "My little children, love one another: this is the commandment of our Lord: if this be done it is sufficient:" told her that she could not please him more than to be entirely inflamed with love for her neighbor, and to please him she conceived that ardent fraternal charity which we have elsewhere described. The beloved Apostle returned love for love, incessantly offering up most ardent supplications for her, as Jesus himself declared, and as appeared in the following vision.

Margaret, being once so bereft of strength that she could not by any means drag herself to her usual church to assist at the Divine offices, sought to relieve her great regret by uttering this stu-

pendous expression: "Would that all my bones and limbs were broken, could I but come to adore thee, O my Jesus, where thou art sacrificed for me on the holy altar!" She had but uttered these words, when she found herself in spirit in an august and majestic temple, in which a venerable and hoary Pontiff was celebrating Mass, assisted by two ministers, one of whom, her Guardian Angel told her, was her dear Saint John supplicating for her.

Jesus revealed to her so many eminent prerogatives of her Seraphic Father, Saint Francis, that her affection for him rivalled his great merits, which equalled those of the Seraphim, as we shall distinctly relate in the chapter of her visions. If we add that the habit of Tertiary rendered her his daughter, and the daughter of his worthy sons, she was relieved by it in body and still more in spirit. She was comforted by his frequent apparitions, and enriched with his most precious graces. The general pardon of her sins granted to her by Jesus, who absolved her like another Magdalene with his own lips, was obtained as he declared, by her loving Holy Patriarch, to whom she consequently owed especial gratitude. To repay it, she endeavored to imitate exactly the virtues of her beloved Father, to be able to confound with the beautiful

original a no less beautiful copy. To enter into his spirit she professed that poverty of all things around her, that universal want, and with it that provident liberality of all things to other poor persons more needy than herself. To liken herself to him, she ever beheld herself buried in the wounds of her crucified Lord, crucified herself by her mortal compassion for his sufferings.

She was also singularly devout to the holy Virgin Martyr, Saint Catharine. The solemn espousal of the Saint by her Jesus, her fidelity so constantly preserved, which gained all those converted by her, so won the affections of Margaret's heart, and obliged her to celebrate the glorious martyrdom with such devout preparation, that her confessor used to call it her festival day of consolation and grace, obtained often from heaven by that Saint, and always by her intercession.

Yet her affection was greater, her confidence more genial, in Saint Mary Magdalene, the disciple of our Lord's predilection. The likeness presented by her past debauchery and present penance, as well as in her habitual and familiar intercourse with Jesus, inflamed her love and took from her devotion all restraint of subjection. The Feast of this most beloved Protectress once found her overcome by grievous illness, which

had entirely deprived her of strength. Yet at the mere remembrance of the great day that had come, she suddenly rallied, rose quickly from her bed, and exultingly called on those present to sing with her hymns of praise to her beloved Saint: and with these hymns on her lips she flew to the church, where she was welcomed by the Saint herself, who appeared escorted by angels, robed in light, and bearing a precious diadem in her hand; and while Margaret relieved her loving heart, she was the more inflamed at this beautiful vision; and to enkindle it still more, Jesus, supporting on his bosom his beloved Magdalene, said to Margaret: "In the Jordan my Father bore testimony of me to John: This is my beloved Son; so I affirm to thee, this is my beloved Daughter, attired in this splendid robe in reward for her solitary penitent life, so spent for my sake, and crowned with this splendid diadem by me in token of that unconquered constancy maintained for my sake in so many combats with the devils."

The vision disappeared, and with it the miraculous strength, leaving her body in its previous debility, unable to raise her head, much less to return home. Yet her heart was so invigorated and quickened in love for Magdalene, that she directed all her actions like her, and offered all



her important ones in her honor; so that no other saint was ever more dear, more confiding, nor more condescending to her: Jesus having revealed that near his throne Magdalene ever watched over her, more than any earthly mother does over her only child.

On another occasion Jesus said, "Daughter, because thou offerest devout praises to all my Saints, I will cause them to obtain for thee the virtue peculiar to each. The Seraphs shall impart to thee the ardor of charity: the Prophets the discernment of secrets: the Apostles lively faith: the Martyrs fortitude in suffering." The goodness of the citizens of heaven did not end here; on their festivities they gave her the sweetest apparitions, the most joyful visions, for her ecstasies became more delicious, her converse with Jesus sweeter on such days, so that they always seemed to her days of Paradise.

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## CHAPTER X.

### HER FAITH AND CHARITY.

FAITH, though blind, serves as a guide and gives the hand to all other virtues unable to take

a step not directed and strengthened by faith, Margaret having then taken such steps in the paths of all virtue, as we have hitherto shown, it becomes us to tell how firm and lively a faith existed in her. It was certainly such, that Jesus **one** day did not hesitate to call her his daughter of perfect faith, more perfect than that of some of his very disciples, while they lived with him; and he was so well pleased, that he often occasioned her to elicit in his presence acts of most perfect faith. She was in the act of receiving on the Saturday preceding the twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost, when she fell to the ground through excessive bodily weakness: then Jesus appeared to her, and made her sit and rest her head, asking: "Dost thou believe that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are one and eternal?" "This question, O Lord, pardon my saying it," replied Margaret, "troubles me greatly; thou knowest, my Jesus, that I believe it undoubtingly; why dost thou ask?" "I knew," replied Jesus, "that my Peter loved me more than the rest, and nevertheless I asked him: because I delight to converse familiarly with those most dear to me."

He repeated the same question another day, to which she replied with a sigh: "Would, O Lord, that I were as certain of never offending thee

more, as I am that God is one in essence, three in person."

Another time after communion he said to her: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: I am the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world. Wilt thou now come to enjoy my heavenly Father?" "Lord," she replied, "when I am with thee, I am with thy Father and the Holy Ghost." "But dost thou believe as thou sayest?" added our Lord, and she: "Thou knowest well, O Lord, that I believe more than I say." And she believed so much more, that when asked by him after another communion whether she believed him to be true God equal to the Father, she replied: "that she believed it so firmly, that she was amazed that her certainty of what he was, did not through awe annihilate her when he conversed with her."

One day conversing with the Father Warden and her confessor on the passion of our Saviour, suddenly excited by great fervor of spirit, she said frankly: "Had I been present at the passion of my Jesus, I would have implored him rather to banish me to hell than subject himself to such torments." Such words seemed to the Father Warden not unlike those which drew on Saint Peter, dissuading our Lord from dying, the sharp rebuke: "Get thee behind me, Satan;"

and he reproved her. But her Jesus, who saw more clearly the sentiments of her pure heart, raised her up in ecstasy and praised her, saying: "Hadst thou uttered these words at the foot of my cross, thy faith, which is all pure, would have saved thee." And truly Margaret's faith was so pure, that by a special privilege she was ever free from those troublesome clouds of temptation adverse to it: hence she was praised by Jesus with this testimony: "I have retained thee thus strong and constant in faith, that thou hast never experienced any doubt of me."

Only one thing appeared to her humility difficult to believe, and this was, how the Divine Majesty could have such love and delight, as he testified to having, in converse with her, a vile creature, a greater sinner than any other. But this difficulty Jesus removed, saying: "Daughter, the scriptures attest of me, that my delight is to be with the children of men: I am pleased then to take my delight with thee, in order to torment more that evil one whom I drove from heaven, and who, in his malignity, seeks to drive me from the hearts of men."

And her sole delight was in Jesus, for she seemed to herself unable to live out of his presence, and said to him one day: ' Oh! had it pleased thee, my Lord, that I had lived with thee, visible

and mortal on earth; surely I would ever have been at thy feet to adore thee with Magdalene." He replied: "Remember that thy faith makes thee enjoy that very bliss with greater merit; for blessed are they that have not seen and have believed."

She frequently raised her heart to God with this devout aspiration: "Lord! Lord!" Her confessor asked her which she meant by this expression, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, or simply, our Lord Jesus Christ? She replied, "that she intended that sole eternal God, who is Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." The devil endeavored to take this invocation from her mouth, discrediting it as unacceptable to God; but her Jesus assured her that it pleased him greatly.

She was, moreover, accustomed to begin every meditation with long and humble adoration of the Holy Trinity; and as she had a supernatural understanding of this mystery, she maintained the liveliest faith in it, producing special acts of reverence through the day; as we stated when speaking of her vocal prayer.

Nor was her hope less firm than her faith, although not as placid; for the devils frequently raised up her very humility to shake it, instigating her through a just appreciation of her great faults, to despair of her eternal salvation, and

through her clear knowledge of her total insufficiency, to be diffident as to the execution of the great works which God suggested to her. Yet if the assaults of the devils to shake her hope were frequent, the impulses of her Jesus to confirm it were still more so.

The intimation once given her of most acute bodily pain and mental anguish impending over her, served as an occasion to the devils to trouble her, and excite distrust as to her ability to sustain them. Then Jesus told her, that his powerful grace, which gave strength to the martyrs, would give it to her also. "It is true," replied Margaret, "but I am totally undeserving of such grace." "And because thou art totally undeserving of it," replied our Lord, "thou shouldst hope the more from my mercy to diffuse itself where there is least merit, and to do best to the least deserving."

After receiving on the eve of St. John the Baptist, she heard her Jesus say, that she was to be even in heaven a beautiful mirror of his mercy from the many extraordinary graces with which he would adorn her. He also combated constantly her humble fear of impeding the fulfilment of all these promises, by her failure to correspond to them. To dissipate this fear, Jesus animated her, by saying, that his blood shed for

her, had purified her from every stain, so that she was the first washed perfectly white in the blood of the Lamb; that she should consequently distrust herself, but not his mercy or his blood. And this she practiced exactly to the shame of all cowardly pusillanimity; fully persuaded by faith, that "I can do all things in him that comforteth me; in the Lord we shall do virtue."

She was often accustomed to say that as we are enriched by the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ, we should more securely hope the most difficult miracles, than an innocent child expects milk from its loving mother; as God himself implies in the words of Isaias: "Can a woman forget her infant so as not to have mercy on the child of her womb? And if she should forget it, yet will I not forget thee." Hence, to persuade her Friars at last to give her the Tertiary habit which she longed for, she told them that emphatic assurance, implanted in her heart and tongue, of a lively hope never again to be severed from God, even though the devil should use greater violence to effect it, leagued with the world and the flesh, as we declared in that chapter. Hence, she felt more certain of her daily bread, when expecting it solely from the providence of her good Father God, than from the charitable care of her benefactress; hence, she

wished Father Giunta to revoke an order given to a pious lady to provide her daily. And her Jesus then especially encouraged her so to trust to Divine providence in her temporal wants, that during a severe illness, she found herself abandoned even by the woman who attended on her; on which occasion our Lord said: "Fear not, daughter, I will take particular care of thy seasonable relief. Seek me alone, and I will seek thee more eagerly than I am sought by thee."

By virtue too of this humble and lively confidence, which, theologians assure us, is usually the measure of graces obtained, she received from God the miraculous conquest of so many obstinate souls, and the fortunate result of so many difficult undertakings: as well as the relief desired by all who commended themselves to her prayers. By it too she obtained for herself special prerogatives.

One day discoursing with her confessor on these divine words: "By faith the saints overcame kingdoms, worked justice and secured the promises;" she added, "Wretched as I am, the thought of that eternal glory endows me with such strength, that I feel ravished with joy, to undergo every bitter torment, every acute suffering; and the hope of my, too, one day being inebriated with that pure joy, so encourages me,



that without pain I would be burnt up alive in a furnace, and die crushed by blows. 'How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord! my soul longeth and fainteth for thy courts.' O my God, that I could see my flesh eaten, consumed by worms to the smallest fragment! that in this guise I might be more like thy sufferings, and go less fettered to enjoy thy glory, free from the shackles of this body; and should one of these worms fall to the earth, I would take it devoutly, and joyfully replace it in the seat of its food and my pain." Such fair fruits produced by her unshaken hope, justify the prediction of the wise man: "Who hope in the Lord shall exchange strength, they shall take wings, as eagles shall they fly, and they shall not faint."

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## CHAPTER XI.

### HER LOVE OF GOD.

AS love of God is the last aim of our being, so it was the only object of Margaret's virtuous desires, and of the liberal favors bestowed upon her by the whole court of heaven whose familiarity

she enjoyed ; and she attained so eminent a degree, that she one day heard from her Jesus ; “ I assure thee that I am loved by thee with greater purity than by any other person living in the world.” This furnace of Margaret’s loving heart, God was pleased to reveal in a vision to that illustrious Franciscan Friar, Conrad, a man no less venerated for his sanctity than renowned for learning. To assure himself of the great things reported by fame of Margaret’s stupendous actions, he came from a distant part to Cortona to converse with her. His interviews were rather rigid examinations than simple conversations, but most fortunate in their result : for from a censor he became an admirer, and from a master, a disciple of Margaret’s, whom he found greater even than fame reported, so that he sought her counsel and direction for his own conscience. This learned Religious, while praying at night for Margaret, felt his mind raised to a joyful spectacle, which he did not however comprehend. He beheld a soul, which, like the mysterious bush shown to Moses, diffused on every side flames of fire, and while he was thinking that it was a symbol of some ardent Seraph already in heaven, he heard an angel distinctly declare that it was Margaret’s soul, so enamored of God, whom alone she sought, desiring nought but Him.

From the very beginning of her conversion she renounced the love of all that was not God; so when miraculously asked by that Crucifix, as we related in the first book: "What she desired," she replied that she wished nought but Him alone. Jesus himself renewed the question once at Epiphany in these more loving terms: "My beloved daughter, spouse and sister, ask me what pleases thee most," and she replied as before in these words: "I ask naught but ever to serve and ever to love thee better."

And as she sincerely panted for this, she always avoided, with all her might, whatever she knew to be an obstacle. Having often experienced that any vain or useless word spoken by her or even heard during the day, hindered her familiar communications with God at night, which so inflamed her with his love; she prized that silent and retired life, in which she uttered, even to her confessor, not a word that was not holy or necessary. Once while shut up in her hut, it happened that some women stopped near the door to discourse profanely, and Margaret, unable to avoid hearing, feared to incur some fault to diminish her love for God; hence she so protested and so commended herself to him, that her Jesus finally came to recreate her with his Divine colloquies.

And she wished the conversation of all who came to treat with her to be absolutely divine; and she hearing them was not only inflamed in heart but strengthened in body. Father Giunta attests that he never found Margaret so prostrated, that his first word on spiritual things did not suddenly raise her up; so that on entering her cell he was often met by the request: "Father of my soul, and beloved brother in Jesus, speak to me always of God, for I feel then so inebriated and comforted, that trouble vanishes at once from my heart, and I no longer feel any debility of body." The word of God, even when read to her, produced the same happy effect. Once when she had been vexed by many temptations, Father Giunta opportunely arrived early in the morning at her hut, and to refresh her after the conflicts which she had sustained, he began to read the Scriptures. He had scarcely read a line, when she was so inflamed that she lost the use of her senses, and remained so long in ecstasy, that the hour of Terce arrived and Father Giunta had to leave her in the care of her good companion, Egidia, who shook and called her several times, to bring her back to herself. She came to herself about Vesper time, when, as Father Giunta had returned, she asked him to resume his interrupted readings; he

wished to obtain an account of the ravishment, and to induce her to take some food ; but seeing her still half ecstatic, yet able to receive food for the soul and commerce with heaven, he yielded and resumed his reading, as she did her ecstasy, in which she assumed a most joyful countenance, or gave in turn signs of admiration, reverence, delight, and sadness ; and in this blissful state she spent the rest of that happy day, during which, as often happened, blessed denizens of heaven taught her the art of emulating their most perfect love for God.

But though she constantly emulated it, yet always discerning the better the loveliness of her God, as she saw that she did not love him as he deserved, she seemed never even to love him as much as she could. Jesus encouraged this humble feeling, and bewailed with her her scanty love ; to increase it, he concluded his lament with these words : " Love me, my daughter, for I love thee above any other living being." Once bitterly disconsolate at this feeling, she threw herself at her confessor's feet, accusing herself more by tears than words, of acting slothfully towards her God and doing nothing for him. And yet she did so much for him then that she never did more. Reminded of this by her confessor, she feared that his words were rather an

effect of compassion for her great grief than a sincere expression of truth. Hence she implored more infallible security from her Jesus, and he mercifully gave it, showing her the signs of true love really in her, saying: "Thou art she, who for my love fasts so long, treats herself so harshly, lives so poorly, flies all relief, seeks every trial, desires nought but to please me, ready to lead a life worse than any death in order to please me: and worse than such a life to encounter the most excruciating death." Margaret, unable to gainsay this, at last believed that she really loved her God.

. But this love of hers did not seem to her so great as it might be, and still less equal to God's infinite merit; so that blushing within herself, she was bitterly disconsolate and was ready to die of a broken heart, had she not been relieved by her Jesus. Assured by faith, that he had always entertained for God that infinite love of which God is worthy, and that he had this love also in our name, as our Redeemer from all our debts, she was so consoled, that she deemed this the greatest favor conferred by her Jesus, and this chiefly enkindled her ardent love for him. Nevertheless desirous of loving her God herself, she earnestly besought her Jesus to admit her permanently into his sacred heart, that his affec-

tions might once become her own : and he soon granted her petition, inviting her to penetrate into his heart through his open side.

From that noble heart she caught such pure flames, that they consumed all attachment to any other object, even holy and superhuman, and made her care only for God alone. For some years she was somewhat too much attached to the sensible tenderness : and she even thought, as beginners commonly do, that exercises of piety performed with little relish on her part, could not be pleasing to God : hence she panted eagerly for spiritual consolations, and was excessively afflicted when they were withheld. Jesus corrected this defective attachment, saying : " Daughter, thou wouldst ever be nourished with the sweets of internal consolation ; but this should not be so, because thou art the daughter of my side, where thou shouldst suck in blood and grief and pain : and I assure thee that by thy constancy in desolations, I am better served, and thou gainest greater merit, for then thou servest me not for thy pleasure, but for mine."

She profited so well by this correction, that she could at last affirm with an oath to her Jesus, that she was ready to live deprived of all spiritual sweetness, and to pass her whole life disconsolate and afflicted with him, her suffering Lord ;

an offering accepted by him, and frequently tested, as is evinced in many parts of this life.

Finding herself one day so dry and desolate, that it required great effort to recite the Lord's prayer, she nevertheless struggled to recite to the full number of the hundreds which she usually said. Then Jesus appeared to her and encouraged her not to omit any; assuring her that if she did not find any sensible comfort in it, it afforded him the greatest pleasure, and this alone should be sufficient to induce her to fulfil punctually any undertaking. "And it did so suffice," continued Margaret, "that there was nothing so grievous or repulsive that did not seem light and sweet when seasoned with his good pleasure."

A furious demon in a most terrible form assailed her one day in her cell, and seizing her by the hair of her head, said that he had permission from God to drag her through the street, and wrench out her life by every fierce torment. The dauntless heroine was not alarmed at this sad intimation, but at once replied: "Do now and ever whatever is pleasing to my God, and fulfil exactly his Divine will however afflicting to me."

But if she was not alarmed by the threats of diabolical rage, she was much troubled by their



suggestions by which they incited her to sin; and once while thus afflicted, Jesus told her not to regret that continual battle wished by him, disposed to try her constancy in that tedious conflict, her endurance of which purged her from every slight stain: and that she was nearer to him, the more removed she feared to be; and that he allowed her thus to fear, that this uncertainty might render her by its stings more prompt to combat, and more quick in having recourse to him. "So be it, O Lord!" she replied; "and that I may be ever united to thee, may all the devils harass me with all their art."

Jesus corrected another imperfection in Margaret, and one into which she frequently fell. This consisted in revolving anxiously in herself, when she prayed or received, what grace God had then conceded to her. He told her that her solicitude should be to execute faithfully all his insinuations, and that she should leave all care of her body and soul indifferent to him, relying on the expression, "The Lord ruleth me, nothing shall be wanting to me: in the place of his pasture shall he set me:" and she afterwards constantly practiced it, although ever more desirous of loving her God, she was indifferent and resigned to such disposition as he chose to make in increasing that love.

Yet to herself she seemed to retain a certain vicious remnant of self-love, and, hence, she frequently recurred to her Jesus to deign to purify her from this stain more difficult than any other to avoid. Despairing of avoiding it entirely, she confidently protested to him during a visit which he paid her on the Feast of the Annunciation, that she left him the custody of her heart, that no other should enter there but God alone. He kindly accepted it, but declared himself a little offended at her extreme fear of being stained by some human affection, saying: "My daughter, thou couldst serve me better, did not thy fears keep thy mind distracted by various cares, which then are negligently dispelled." Signifying to her and to us, by this advice, that if the fear of offending God distracts our mind, and disturbs our soul, it is not exempt from the very defect which we dread.

Fearing one day lest her faults had deprived her of the loving familiarity of her Jesus, she was heard weeping bitterly in her cell, and exclaiming, "Restore thyself to me, O most high God, restore thyself to me, O my Beloved, return to me, O my Creator; return to me, my Redeemer, Spouse of my soul, for without thee I have no rest." Our Lord soon consoled her, appearing with a countenance full of love, and

among other affectionate expressions he used this: "Thou art my daughter, a light set in darkness, that thy life may be a beautiful confirmation of the truth of my faith, which thy good Father Francis defended, and increased with so great zeal; but remember that I do not wish thee to examine so much, and be so solicitous in all thou dost: 'Cast thy thought on the Lord, and he will nurture thee.'"

And she really so cast her thoughts on God, and so fixed her affection on him, that she was satisfied with him alone. He once showed her an angel who was to be constantly assisting and comforting her. She delighted at the offer, but declared her only desired comfort to be the assistance and presence of himself, the Creator of all the angels. One of these appeared to her while longing for the communing of her Jesus; but she, like Magdalene, seeking the body of her Master at the sepulchre, scarcely deigned him a look, which she gave him to see whether he was her expected Lord. He showed her one day her Seraphic Father, Saint Francis, in heavenly glory, attended by other saints; and to persuade her to remain in their company, he displayed to her minutely, their pure content, their overflowing joy; but she protested that her best content and greatest glory was to be accompanied by him.

On another occasion, he set before her in a more beautiful form the glory of his most blessed Mother Mary, and after making her contemplate it fully, he asked her in astonishment as it were, why she remained indifferent, and expressed no wish not to lose the joyful sight. She replied, that while she saw and enjoyed him, she could have no other desire, he satisfying all. To alleviate her sufferings one day, he offered promptly to show her the great and signal rewards with which he intended to exalt her on earth, and the sublime glory to which he was to raise her in heaven; but she frankly replied, that she did not care to know it; he alone sufficing for her, he alone being all the good she desired, to attain which she was ready to live most wretched on earth, and even endure hell, deprived forever of all the joys of heaven. To that degree was her heart detached from self, and purged from all self-interest, virtuous even, and superhuman. "But for the very reason that thou seekest me only," replied Jesus, "I wish to load thee with my gifts on earth and in heaven. Thou art truly my beloved daughter, who obeyest me perfectly: thou my true spouse, who lovest me alone: thou my mother, who fulfillest entirely my Father's will. I therefore, wish to fulfil thine, nor shall there be any creature, for

whom thou intercedest with me, to whom I will not show mercy." Blessed we, if she intercedes for us; and happier still, if she obtains for us a love of God like her own. "Make my heart burn, in loving Christ my God."

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## CHAPTER XII.

### HER ECSTASIES AND VISIONS.

THIS history is full of Margaret's ecstasies and visions, as her most penitent life was; in which Jesus wished the sorrows of Calvary, and the joys of Thabor, to be most frequent; as he wished her to be a beautiful portrait of his mortal life, in which ever blended the supreme joy of the King of glory with the supreme suffering of the King of martyrs. Margaret's whole life was indeed a fearful and delightful blending of blissful joys and excruciating pain. But as I do not undertake the task of relating all these, for it would far exceed any human tongue, for the same reason it is not my intention to relate all; yet I will gather here the ecstasies and visions, an account of which can most please the Saint herself, and her devout clients; and for her grat-

itude and my reverence, I begin by those which belong to the Seraphic Saint Francis and his most estimable order.

There appeared one day before her ecstatic mind that most sublime seat of glory, destined for Lucifer in heaven; and while in wonder she admired its beauty, she heard her Jesus say, "that that was the position occupied in heaven by his beloved Francis, raised to it by his profound humility, and charity so ardent that there was no Christian heart in the world like his: and that the wide space around that lofty throne was to be filled by his children in humility, in love like their holy fathers. That he deemed their order the garden of his love, worthy of being cultivated and defended by his special care. All this she should tell them on his behalf, and add that they were his zealous apostles, as dear to him as aught else on earth; that because they were so dear to him, he permitted such black calumnies, such rabid persecutions from the world, as he had permitted against his first Apostles; and that if they had not like these all died martyrs, they should nevertheless all be crowned with martyrdom by suffering such torments, which on an approaching occasion would be greatly increased: after which he would sanctify and glorify them more, in reward for their loving

care of her, whom he had given them expressly to sanctify and glorify them to the end of time." All this she faithfully reported to her loved friars, and they by the fruit they derived from it, corresponded fully to the idea which God had in wishing them thus informed: they persevered constantly in their fervent preaching: they intrepidly sustained the common slanders: they served with greater attention their great daughter, whom not a few wished to have as a spiritual mother, imitating her example, invoking her in their wants, consulting her in doubts, and fulfilling the intimations which God, through her, was pleased to give them frequently, as Father Giunta relates in the Bollandists.

That same day Jesus wafted her ecstatic mind to a more eminent and luminous throne, the very throne of his Mother, Mary, Queen of heaven. Margaret excited at this delightful spectacle, and the more to enjoy its beauty, sought to comprehend the better its sublime height and discover better its radiant brilliancy, but all in vain: Jesus telling her that she could not fathom the bliss of that great soul, rendered more like his own in sanctity than any other, and made more conformable to his in glory beyond all others. And he began to extol the privileges of his beloved

Mother, protesting that she merited even greater encomiums than are bestowed upon her in the Scriptures, so that could heaven give her greater honor or greater glory, this greater degree would be due his Mother ; so that she must not wonder if she saw him associate so near to himself that holiest of creatures, and associate himself with her (as he frequently did with Margaret) to honor his Mother with the Angelic Salutation. She thus learned from his example to esteem and honor more so great a lady, who, though so great, had yet chosen her heart as a special throne, and enriched it with most signal gifts, which she constantly obtained of him as his Mother. This ecstasy happened in those happy days when multitudes of sinners, moved to compunction by Margaret's zeal, were sent by her to Father Giunta to confession, wearying him with so many penitents that he said clearly one day, that he had lost all heart and strength to cleanse so many stables. Hence Jesus concluded the ecstasy by telling Margaret to announce to Father Giunta in his name, that he erected as many thrones to God as he cleansed stables.

One Sunday near Epiphany, having had a long conference in her cell with her Jesus, he suddenly withdrew and disappeared. To find him again she rushed ecstatic and frantic from



her cell, and ran sobbing and groaning to the church of her friars. Father Giunta met her in the way, and discovering the cause by a kind of intuition, said: "Let us return to the cell to find Jesus." Margaret obeyed, and in reward for her obedience, found him more benignant than before, for he clasped her to his heart and said: "That her great thirst which she entertained for him pleased him; but that she should remember that as daughter of his afflicted heart, she should quench her thirst with gall and not with milk; and that she could not find him by any better way than he had taken to find her; and as he had become her Redeemer at the expense of bitterness, so by bitterness was she to become one of his redeemed."

He had kept her for some days plunged in this bitterness, in most arid desolation of spirit; to alleviate this bitter distress, her compassionate confessor, on the first Friday of Lent, began to read her some of the special graces promised her by her Jesus. This sweet remembrance revived her dejected spirit, and to her most contrite tears succeeded more than usual joy; so joyful was the ecstasy that ravished her. But recollecting that it was Friday, and ashamed of exulting so on that day, on which her Jesus had suffered so much, she prayed him to take away this consolation and restore her pain.

The ordinary object of her visions was her Jesus, who, although wont to appear in some stage of his dolorous passion, nevertheless appeared at times glorious as he is now in heaven, and on other occasions an infant such as he was in the grotto at Bethlehem. Once while praying devoutly, she beheld before her that dear child, extending his hands to her, eager to be clasped to her bosom and caressed. She also beheld him lie shivering in the manger, taken up and nursed at Mary's pure breast, from which he turned joyful and loving.

She not unfrequently saw the pompous entrance which she was one day to make in heaven; placed in the very rank of the most blessed Seraphim close by his most beloved Magdalene; and in delighting over this joyful apparition, her ecstatic spirit so departed from her body, that a fire-brand falling on her bare feet so burnt the flesh that the wound remained many days, yet without her experiencing any pain.

Yet her visions were not always so joyful; sometimes they made her weep disconsolately. This was the case whenever Jesus appeared wounded by the Jews or tortured by perverse Christians. One morning, as Margaret was passing a church, she heard the usual sign of the elevation given by the bell; the presence of her

Jesus in his Sacrament soon ravished her in ecstasy, and in her ecstasy she entered the church, at the very moment when the unworthy priest was raising the consecrated Host before the people; but instead of the Host she beheld in his hands her Jesus, black and defiled by the sacrilegious man. Sad and afflicted, her Divine Lord addressed her, saying: "And what thinkest thou of me?" "Ah, Lord," she replied, all stiffening with horror, "because thou art most beautiful, it breaks my heart to see thee so ill treated." Yet her gentle zeal implored not the chastisement of the guilty priest, but his repentance and amendment, often uttering, "Mercy! mercy!" Jesus promised to grant it, if he did condign penance for his execrable guilt, and he concluded the colloquy by transpiercing Margaret's heart with a sad message: "Tell Father Giunta that the majority of my ministers touch me with hands as black and filthy."

As this may be true even in our days, it cannot but rend the heart of every good Christian, and now it checks my horror-stricken pen. May she employ all her zeal, and by her powerful intercession render all our modern priests as holy as those of old were wicked. The sanctified priesthood will be the most joyful of her visions, the gladdest for heaven. "Thy priests shall put on justice and thy saints shall exult."

## CHAPTER XIII.

## HER PROPHECIES.

THE discernment of hidden things is so eminent a gift that it is well said in Isaias: "Announce the things which are to happen hereafter, and we will know that ye are gods." Now of this gift so peculiarly his own, God was so liberal with his Margaret, that it is impossible to find one among the saints to whom he imparted it so lavishly. Even when she was sunk in so much sin, he not unfrequently illumined her mind with this fair light, so that more than once was she heard replying to those who zealously reprov'd her for her wantonness: "You will see, yes, you will see the time when they will call me a saint, and pilgrims come with their palmer's staff to my tomb." When she had become a saint, these lights grew so clear that it suffices to say, that she was almost always joined in confidential converse with Incarnate Wisdom itself, who discovered to her every event that concerned her, and revealed to her the secrets of other hearts.

She foresaw and openly predicted to Father Giunta all the discussion that took place in the Chapter at Siena, as to the course to be pursued

by the friars towards her. She also foresaw the sublime glory which she was to enjoy with the saints in heaven, and the high honor to be paid her by men on earth. She knew the day, hour, and moment of her blessed death. She knew that her body was to remain in no hands but those of her friars, and she knew this at a time when every circumstance in human probability seemed to indicate the reverse. Relying on this, a certain religious not only believed himself, but persuaded others, that Margaret would end her days separated from her friars, and far from Cortona. Jesus declared this to be not so, again assuring her that he had given her alive and dead to the sons of Saint Francis as a pledge of his love; and that for the glory and advantage of the Cortonese he had always retained her in that city, so beloved by him now as her abode, and to be as beloved hereafter as her resting-place.

Jesus also discovered to Margaret the fortunate future of her son; and the zealous mother clearly assured Father Giunta that he would enter the order of Saint Francis, be raised to the priesthood, and by his fervent preaching give glory to God, lustre to religion, terror to hell, and joy to heaven, whither followed by many souls converted by him, he would be admitted, if not full of years, at least loaded with merits.

There were few or none of the Cortonese whose interior ways were unknown to her, or which she did not on occasion declare. She one day revealed to her generous benefactress, the Countess Maineria, that if she wished fewer disasters in her house, and greater pledges of the Divine protection, she must induce the Count, her son, to merit them by cleansing his soul in an exact general confession. A townsman of Cortona became reconciled to a vile rival; his companions, deeming such a reconciliation base and vile, avoided him in public and flouted him. Upheld by Margaret, he nevertheless maintained his peace, and cheerfully suffered his confusion; and as a reward he received from Margaret the assurance of his speedy death, directing him to prepare for it by granting one of his sons permission to enter religion, and himself to frequent the sacraments with greater devotion and compunction.

An afflicted gentleman begged Margaret's prayers to deliver him from some evils very annoying to him; but she, to deliver him from eternal woes, of which he cared but little, increased the weight of the temporal ones, which he dreaded; revealing to him that God for his great confusion would degrade him from the honorable post he held, in punishment for his

faults, great and small, in order, as she distinctly explained to him, to give him compunction and amendment.

A lady, desirous of success in an urgent matter, also sought the aid of her prayers. Margaret replied with a sigh, that two great sins which she had committed were an obstacle to its success and to any other good fortune; sins which she jealously guarded in her heart, and did not reveal even in confession. The lady shuddered to see her hidden secret thus known to Margaret, and conceived a greater affection and esteem for her.

Another lady conceived the same, when one day conversing with Margaret, she was lovingly reminded of the same truth, which she wickedly endeavored to conceal by greater falsehoods. Her greedy companion conceived not love and esteem, but envy and contempt on being rebuked by her for her insatiable and indiscreet importunity; and by many secret thefts, not only of goods with her hands, but of reputations by her mouth.

A man of letters had such faith in Margaret, that though sick he had himself carried to her to be more calmed in mind than cured in body; and to calm his mind Margaret discovered to him the secret occasion of his trouble: telling

him, "that he would have enjoyed quiet had he hated every incentive to sin as he hated sin; if he wished to keep his mind more chaste, he should give less free reins to his thoughts; that he would be more chary in exposing himself to danger, if he would triumph over it more easily; and that he would more promptly flee occasions, if he wished affections to fly less quickly from his heart; that he now felt so abased and dejected in punishment for the presumption already shown in his great memory; that he should therefore trust more to God and less to himself; that he would then find fewer defects, and enjoy the more the effects of God's omnipotence." Full of astonishment at this true picture of his interior, he felt calmed as he resolved to follow the directions of his amiable censor; but as he seemed to himself not sufficiently faithful, he returned to her to acquire fresh courage and strength to combat the enemies discovered by her prophetic light.

But if she rendered this man more rigid against himself, she rendered more mild and benignant a superior who was always imperious and austere. He forgot the counsel of St. Paul to the Galatians: "Instruct in the spirit of lenity: considering thyself lest thou too be tempted;" and always acted as a severe judge and not as



a loving father towards a guilty subject. She told this superior, through Father Giunta, that the unhappy man persecuted by him was like a rock hanging over a great precipice, and that he should remember that in commanding he filled the place of that Lord, who enjoins meekness rather than rigor on his vicars: "Learn of me that I am meek and humble of heart:" and who declared to his first Vicar, that he should pardon the offences of others not seven times but seventy times seven times.

A noble lady of Cortona, who was left a widow, governed herself in her widowhood by the advice given to such as her by the apostle St. Paul, a stranger to pomp, guarded in conversation, keeping aloof from all shows, attentive to her family, assiduous in devotion. A life so exemplary soon procured her the highest veneration from all; and also raised her in her own esteem, so that she vainly reputed herself better than she was. To undeceive such vanity, and cleanse her more completely from all stain, God revealed to Margaret, who was then imploring for her the gift of perseverance, many old faults of hers, not noticed by her, and not mentioned in her confessions; and at the same time directed Margaret to declare all this to her minutely, to induce her to think less of her present virtues and more of

her past vices. Margaret promptly obeyed, announcing to her all these faults through Father Giunta their common confessor. The faults overlooked by the lady were precisely such as persons in her condition most frequently commit and most easily forget, for which reason I will here sketch them.

Margaret said then to Father Giunta, that the lady when a girl had too immoderately adorned her neck and head, and that she had indulged in too great a love for the one whom she married, anxiously soliciting his addresses; and that when finally he obtained her in marriage, that she rejoiced so on the wedding day that she entirely forgot God and her usual exercises of devotion; and that she continued this neglect even when married, for idolizing her husband, she could not contain herself even on the holiest days; and ever intent in surpassing all in grace and beauty, she spent but little time in her oratory, and much at her mirror; eager by means of the latter to remove any bodily tarnish, but most deaf to the admonitions of God to correct the defilements of her soul. God would have wished her more discreet with her domestics, and she was always more harsh and imperious; more compassionate to the poor, and she was but the harder, leaving her very relatives to suffer from want; more

anxious for the general good of his country, and she was also the more embittered in faction. How often had she figured in public balls, led thither by an ambition to be deemed the belle of the assembly! How often did she enter the company of the most beautiful, to derive from the comparison a greater relief to her own beauty! And if she met one fairer than herself, how she burned with envy and hate, how she lowered her with insinuations, discredited her by slanders! Always ready to misrepresent the actions of others, never ready to commend, as though none deserved praise but herself, and deeming herself really so for having avoided some vices and practiced some virtues. Such was this rigid judgment which the contrite lady admitted to be just, and by which she profited; but as Margaret predicted, enough to save her sou', but not enough to sanctify herself.

But if the lady did not derive the greatest advantage from Margaret's prophetic revelation, a poor woman did. Desirous of imitating Margaret in internal perfection, as she was like her in the outward profession of Tertiary, and in the name of Margaret, she earnestly besought her one day to tell her what she saw in her displeasing to God, and what would please him more. The humble Saint, to conceal her hab-

itual discernment of the hearts of others, told her that she had asked light of her Jesus, and that he had told her. She reported it as follows: Our Lord said that she should renew her general confession at Father Giunta's feet, with a more exact search and purer contrition, and that she should hasten the fulfillment of that restitution which she was bound to make; after which, she should profess a more austere poverty, a more solitary retirement, a more dependent subjection on the counsels and instructions of the friars. All this she faithfully performed, and so deserved Margaret's most tender love, and our Saint, by the wish of our Lord, ever considered her as a most special daughter.

A young man, saved by the power of Margaret's prophetic light, had also just ground to deem her his most benign mother. His veneration for the sons of Saint Francis had led him from the diocese of Arezzo to Cortona, to confess to one of them. Meeting Father Giunta, he made his confession to him, after which, he wished to receive. While zealous Father Giunta rejoiced greatly at so much devotion, Margaret, better informed, mourned over it in her cell. She knew that the apparent devotion of the unhappy man was an enormous and double sacrilege, occasioned by his false shame which

induced him to conceal his worst faults from the confessor. As Father Giunta visited Margaret that day, she, ardent with zeal, and bathed in tears, told him distinctly the facts concealed by the sacrilegious man, and bade him find him to bring him back to God by a better confession. The disconsolate Father hastened away, and, finding the unhappy man still reluctant to accuse himself of all, began to accuse him, naming each of the hidden sins, and all the internal and external circumstances revealed by Margaret. The wretched man, horror-struck at so just and minute a revelation, blushing for ill advised shame, washed it away in his tears, and making a sincere confession, avowed his gratitude and reverence to Margaret, who had been so miraculously serviceable to him.

Many others in distant countries were greatly aided by her prophetic lights, whereby discovering their perverse love, and God's imminent scourges, she interceded with the Almighty to remove the punishment and its cause, obtaining their conversion and compunction.

Many of her broken sentences, accompanied by bitter sighs, showed her general knowledge of the many faults, which then contaminated all classes of men, and of the sanguinary wars and mortal pestilences which in consequence

soon after plunged in grief the whole Christian world. Yet of these we cannot specify any, because she concealed all this even from her confessor, to whom she revealed only those lights which might lead to illusion, or required co-operation for successful operation. She was more reluctant to reveal even these, and sought anxiously to conceal her gifts even from her confessor, who avowed that he had to resort to stratagems, to delude her humility into the discovery of her own gifts; and that he had to use express commands. By this means he elicited from her all that we have hitherto related, and will hereafter relate in the course of this history.

On the Feast of Saints Chrysanthus and Daria in October, Jesus commanded her that no matter how afflicted and weak she should be, she should still persevere in recalling the sinful, because on that day he infused into her a special gift, by which she should permanently discern present secrets, and divine the future; declaring that he enriched her with this great gift as a reward for that singular innocence which her austere and fervent penance had at last implanted in her soul. So much may even a most sinful soul purify itself! And to this may a great sinner rise, if her penance equals her sinfulness. "Where sin has abounded, grace has superabounded."

## BOOK III.

## MARGARET'S DEATH AND MIRACLES.

## CHAPTER I.

## HER LAST ILLNESS.

THE sweet foretastes of heaven so often enjoyed by Margaret in her ecstatic moments, as they increased her love for heaven, disengaged her from earth, which compared to paradise, she saw incapable of transforming her all into God, and uniting herself to him, never to be diverted more by distractions, or separated by sin; and as this immutable security was the greatest happiness which she envied in the saints in heaven, so the opposite uncertainty was the worst calamity which she deplored in the struggling members of the church militant; and she deplored it so much, that for this alone from the moment of her conversion, she shrunk from the promise of a long life, and rejoiced at the threats of anticipated death—a horror and joy increased in her daily by that cruel minister of her interior mar-

tyrdom, the continual fear of falling into sin. Hence, as she asked no grace so ardently of her Jesus, as to be preserved from all fault, so there was no prayer of hers more frequent than to be soon taken out of this life. To these frequent and urgent appeals she did not always receive the same answer from her Jesus: sometimes he told her that a long life was more expedient for her, that her continued suffering of pain and trials might purge her from all remnant of sin, and better adorn her with all virtue; at other times he encouraged her to conform her will to God's, and to rejoice to live as long as she was at peace with him. Once he asked her: "And what will these little sheep of thine do without thee?" She quickly replied: "They will be assisted by thee, O Lord, the best of shepherds." But, finally, a year before her blessed death, the Sunday after Epiphany, he gave her the longed for assurance that her departure from this world and her entrance into heaven were at hand; saying: "Know, O daughter, that my Mother Mary, my precursor Saint John the Baptist, thy Father Francis, thy beloved Magdalene, with all the Court of heaven, continually pray me to hasten thy entrance into heaven and I am resolved soon to grant them this satisfaction." Margaret, rendered joyful and exultant by this



security, hastened to increase her fervor and multiply her austerities; but these were still more increased by God himself, who visited her with such excruciating pain, such burning fever, as soon to deprive her of all strength, and oblige her to surrender at discretion on her hard couch to her pain. Her soul rejoiced the more her body suffered. Conscious that the more the body was consumed by these torments, the more weak became the bonds that prevented her soaring to the bosom of her God, and seeing herself now so near him, she conceived such joy that she forgot the excruciating anguish of her suffering body. As this insensibility increased, Margaret, panting more than ever for suffering, endeavored to distract her mind from this pleasing thought, and she besought her Jesus to temper these joyous lights, that she might die in pain like him, as she had ever lived crucified with him. Jesus heard her, so that in a familiar colloquy with her, he assured her that she would in those months, more than at any other time, partake of the full martyrdom of his passion, so acute would then be her bodily pains, so fearful the afflictions of mind; and such both really were.

There was not a member in her body but was racked with cruel pain; yet the most afflicted parts were the inside of her mouth and throat:

there an acrid humor gnawed and inflamed the quick flesh, enkindling burning fever, presenting a variety of symptoms, agitating her night and day, and keeping her in constant, unremitting suffocation. Whenever these pains relaxed for a moment, invigorated by her zeal, she rose from what was rather her rack than her bed, and, directed by her companion, hastened whither the poverty of others summoned her. God wished to attest her great charity by a beautiful miracle, the last time that she practiced it. She had gone down into the city to visit a sick child and to console its afflicted parents. Having effected her charitable design, she wished, on her way to her poor hut, to take leave of the nuns of Santuccio, so called, whom she loved dearly, because she saw them full of love for Jesus their spouse. She called them then to the parlor, and spent some time in devout conference to their mutual delight; and as a last pledge of their constant reciprocal love, she received from them an aid and left them a prodigy. The desired journey accomplished, the long discourse held, and held with all the ardor of her inflamed heart, had entirely exhausted her strength; so that to recover enough to drag herself back to her hut, she asked them in charity for a sup of wine. The poor nuns not having any then, sought and soon ob

tained it from a stranger: Margaret took a little, and giving back the rest, told them with a pleasing smile to throw it in the cask. The obedient religious soon threw it in, but did not so quickly draw it out; for it so multiplied, that drawing from it daily for the common use of the monastery, it supplied more than the cask could have held if brimming full. A multiplication the more pleasing to these good religious, as it was a truer presage of the lasting multiplied graces, which the grateful Margaret was to pour from heaven on that favorite community.

Reaching her cell by the aid of her companion's arms, all her torments assailed her again, and never ceased to rack her more from day to day, till by their intensity, they separated the soul from the body—a disunion that would naturally have taken place much sooner, as nature could not have maintained a soul in so racked a body. The Almighty alone maintained it, wishing, for the greater lustre of Margaret's sanctity, to renew in her the wonders of the bush remaining fresh and alive amid the devouring flames. So her Angel Guardian assured her on the Feast of the Purification, that is twenty days before the expiration of this prodigy of her miraculous life. "As gold in the furnace hath God tried his elect."

## CHAPTER II.

## HER LAST TEMPTATIONS.

EVEN more than by bodily pain was the poor sick Margaret afflicted in mind all that year; diseased humors formed maladies in the body, but still more did the envious devils excite temptations in her soul, either by secret fraud or open assault. They began to trouble her with scruples as to her present life; because in consequence of her total debility and mortal languor, which kept her prostrate on her couch, she was no longer present at the offices of the church, nor used her hair cloth, nor her discipline, nay was often unable even to accomplish the number of prayers formerly prescribed by her Jesus. This scruple troubled her more, as she was then deprived of her good confessor, so dextrous and fortunate in calming her: God having disposed, for the greater exercise of her resignation, that important affairs should unavoidably keep Father Giunta away from Cortona almost the whole year. For the very reason that it was so ordained by God, Margaret accepted this absence with heroic resignation, and such confidence in the Divine aid, that she obtained even more than she hoped. Her Jesus appeared to assure her

that, in her last moments, she should be assisted by her desired confessor, whose place he would meanwhile fulfill in her regard. O happy one!

When then the devils indiscreetly troubled her with this scruple, He hastened to calm her. The first time that, as we know, this happened was on Low Sunday, when remembering her inability to fulfill her usual devout exercises on that day, she began, in order to compensate as best she might, to discourse of holy things with her companion; but Jesus wished her to converse with him; for ravishing her in ecstasy in the midst of her discourse, he said: "What wilt thou, O my daughter? Fear not, I thy Creator am with thee; and I so rejoice in thy present state that I bless thee in all thy works." "Ah! how can that be, O Lord," replied Margaret, still influenced by her doubts, "when sickness withdraws me from any service to thee?" "Exercised, rather shouldst thou say, fulfilling all I ask of thee: thy food, O daughter, thy drink, thy sleep, thy watching, thy silence, thy seasonable conversation, the whole tenor of thy life is a continual prayer. Because thou dost all with a sincere desire of obeying me, and with a sovereign hatred of offending me; hence, I bless thee, thy love, and thy very cell, and assure thee that thou art a true light which, in its

ascent to heaven, will shine brightly among the purest virgins, and in its setting on earth will enlighten many blind sinners, who will return contrite and converted to me."

Jesus afforded her a similar comfort on another occasion, when the devils kept her sad and disconsolate with the apprehension that the cessation of her usual austerities rendered her less pleasing than at first to God. Appearing to her all gladsome, he assured her that her actual submission and the denial of her own will were of much greater merit than her past voluntary penances; which injure rather than help the one who confides too much in them, and indiscreetly gives himself up, as Egidia her companion, and Giannello her votary, had both learned by experience, having imprudently imitated her first rigor, having both become unwise self-slayers, dying of their indiscreetness. These divine proofs, comprehended by Margaret, quickly calmed her, and recalled by Him strongly assured her: to replunge her in the tempest, the devils labored to prevent her recalling them, and to take away all belief in them, by making her suspect them illusions; a suspicion which gained strength from her very feelings of humility, and from the vile imaginations of her old irregular life, which fancy then vividly depicted; suggesting

to her, at the very time, that if she had really been so favored by God, these favors would have entirely exempted her from these filthy phantoms. And here fiercer than ever came up her dark fear, either that she had repented and freed herself, or at least that she would fall into some new error.

This diabolical attack on poor Margaret was more frequent and powerful than the former, and Jesus himself contributed to wound her the more, to the greater scorn of the devil and the greater glory of Margaret, withdrawing from her in these sad trials not only his visible presence, but also all sensible comfort of devotion, leaving her in aridity and desolation. Yet He who, according to the Royal Psalmist, never turns away his eyes from his servants to succor them in season,\* gave her as much strength as he withdrew of devotion, reviving her faith, strengthening her hope, so that with this shield on her arms, this sword in her hand, she might come forth from every assault an unconquered heroine, combat magnanimously, resist constantly, triumph gloriously, singing in her exultation, "If armies should stand arrayed against me, my heart will not fear: if battle should rise against me, in Him will I hope. Put

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\* *Oculi Domini super justos, et aures ejus in preces eorum.*

me beside thee, and let every man's hand fight against me." Nevertheless the devils, fiercer than ever, returned to the assault with open force, and so terribly, that I know of no other dying Saint that was ever so assailed. And God permitted it, in my opinion, in order that in Margaret's agony every converted sinner might learn not to be discouraged at any great risk of death, nor to be too sure of the pardon of past sins. "Of the forgiven sin be not without fear;" because, though remitted and cancelled so far as regards the guilt of the sin, they never cease to cry vengeance to Divine justice: "My sin is ever against me," exacting, that he who had more outraged God, by succumbing to temptation, should show himself more obedient, by triumphing over worse temptations. "Wherein a man sins, therein shall he be punished."

The Sunday after Whitsunday, having to her great joy received Holy Communion in bed, ravished from her senses, she heard from her Jesus these words: "I am the bread of life; he that eateth me, the same shall live by me; behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world;" and then he added, "that it was most pleasing to him for a soul to continue in the desert of this world, to suffer more for his love, where one word of hers would have more aided



another's salvation, than many declamations of preachers." Although Margaret was then most anxious to die, alarmed at the dangers of the present life; nevertheless intent on that alone which she discovered to be most pleasing to her God, she at once rivalled the great Saint Martin, and promptly showed herself ready to prolong her tribulations in this laborious exile: "Lord, if I am still useful to thy people, I do not refuse the labor, thy will be done." Jesus was pleased with her offer, but accepted it only so far as to declare it his will, in the short period she had yet to live, to make her experience all those pains and trials, that could have pierced her successively in a long series of years; and he suddenly executed his sad announcement.

Her mind was suddenly darkened, her heart rent, and her whole mind disturbed, and she beheld before her in frightful form a real demon, which dancing around the room, and clapping its hands, and laughing aloud, pretended to have overcome Margaret, and to be about to bear her guilty soul to hell. She shuddered at this sight, and still more at the fear of having fallen into some new fault. Palpitating and groaning, she turned to the priest then seasonably beside her, and told him what she saw. The good priest

endeavored to bring the demon into subjection and to infuse courage into Margaret's heart; but his words did not banish the audacity of the devil or diminish Margaret's discouragement. Meanwhile her holy Angel Guardian came up, and echoing through the air these words: "Let the warrior of God arise against the daring adversary," also appeared visibly, and at once imperiously asked the malignant spirit: "What hast thou to do with this soul which God wishes in heaven among his Seraphim?" The devil laughed at him, and audaciously protested that she was to be his companion in hell, and that he expected her as long as he saw it united to the body; and he rushed towards the bed, as if to seize her. The holy angel repulsed him, and to encourage Margaret, terrified with this great fright, he said: "Daughter of Jerusalem, fear not the vain efforts of the malignant one; conquered and subdued he stands beneath the feet of Almighty God, who has chosen thy soul as his impregnable fortress, and I remain to defend it." Margaret obediently endeavored not to fear, yet she always felt a greater dread; because she constantly saw that vile demon insulting over her. He not only became furious, but planting himself near, vomited every insult which his implacable hatred suggested. The priest then

present, also terribly alarmed, declared that he heard this: "What is that vile beast doing here? After living like a filthy wolf, does she pretend to go to heaven among the pure lambs? This is surely not the law promulgated by God, whom by this presumption of thine thou dost outrage more than all men by their sins: hence he is justly more thy enemy than the enemy of all other sinners. And dost thou hope with such perverse sentiments to be received by God's wisdom? I possess it and not thou." The holy angel denied this, calling him alone full of the serpent's malice: but he, deriding the denial, cried, "What a beautiful vase is this, truly worthy to be the throne of God's wisdom! Oh! did he but permit me, I would suffocate thee in an instant and tear thee to pieces."

Such barkings without a bite convinced Margaret of his impotence, and she began to feel less fear. Seizing at this, the crafty demon passed from threats to wiles, and bowing obsequiously would fain be one of the most favorite pages of her future court. Margaret despised him, saying to him in derision, that she was ashamed of such courtiers, whose leader was so filthy and deformed. The devil piqued, retorted with this imprecation: "Mayest thou once come to see me!" but the angel replied that this could

never be ; but he more ferocious and savage repeated : “ Yes, yes, I shall see her, and I hope to lead her thither now ;” and dancing again around the room, he again rushed at her more impetuously than before. Provoked at such pride, the holy angel used his own superiority against him, and bid him not to venture to contend with him ; but that he should sink hidden in his own smoke, and enveloped in his own flames ; and that as an excuse for his present defeat, he should tell Lucifer that God had so strengthened his Margaret, that all hell in arms against her would have failed, still more the efforts of a single devil. “ And is it possible,” howled the despairing demon, “ that we who have conquered so many souls, are to be defeated by this vile and once so guilty woman ?” “ But she is now holier than she has been sinful, and in punishment for having been so incredulous towards her, you shall ever receive more shameful defeats from her, even when dead and buried. This say I, who am not a liar like thee, nor am I weak as thou art impotent, for the Lord gives and grants to me dominion and superiority over all such as thou.” “ Oh, see the beautiful humility ! In us it would have been suddenly detested by thee as most exquisite pride.” “ And justly,” replied the angel, ‘ and justly, because

your ambition aims to exalt yourselves, while our gratitude seeks only to magnify the Author of all our good ; hence our praises are as different from thy boasts as ascending from descending. We advance hourly in the gifts of God, and you are ever deeper set in your obstinacy to become daily worse, impious that you are."

The proud demon at last silently disappeared, and then the holy angel turning to Margaret: "Does it seem to thee, O daughter, a great blow now received by thy insolent assailant? The proud one tastes the bitter fruits of his audacity, and his unequalled temerity in presuming of himself against thee. And thou, O daughter, to conquer him still more, take this standard, adorned with two crosses, one white and one red, symbols of the water and blood that flowed from the wounded side of thy Lord ; and by the aid of this rely on triumphing." Saying this, he too disappeared from Margaret's eyes, and she, with a burning sigh, sent after him all the affectionate thanks which her grateful heart already prepared to utter for the aid given and the gift bestowed ; and comprehending the mysterious signification of the latter, she wished at once to profit by it.

Although weary and fatigued by the fright that she had undergone, and the length of the conflict, she made the priest sit down beside her,

and besought him to discuss her conscience with her, confessed to him with the most exact minuteness, shedding more tears than she uttered words. The devil was so enraged at it, that to divert her from that confession, he again appeared in the room more menacingly than ever, and amid dark globes of flame, vomited, among others, this blasphemy: "Cursed be He that has granted thee so subtle and delicate a conscience." She resisted this attack no less triumphantly than the former one, but remained most scrupulous in consequence of her resistance, imagining that she had given way to too great fear of the tempter, and not sufficiently repelled the temptation; so that she was more afflicted at the probability of this fault than at the sight of the fierce demon; she was fainting with grief and would have died of it, had not her good angel soon appeared to console her. He re-appeared and assured her that she had fulfilled her duty, and that when overcome by fear she was unable to answer him, he had replied for her. Margaret, greatly consoled by this, blessed the Almighty.

But God, who wished Margaret's life a still more perfect copy of our Lord's, constantly agitated by vicissitudes of pleasure and of pain, the latter more bitter as the former were sweeter, permitted the devil to disturb this consolation

by exciting in her heart another trouble. She had always had a most clear comprehension of God's sanctity, that implacable enemy of every shadow of fault; hence, conscious of the impropriety and pain of a soul which, separated from the body, appears before God's tribunal, though pure, yet not fully purified, had adopted the sentiment of Job, to wish to hide in hell rather than appear in the Divine sight not entirely cleansed from all guilt; and the devils heightening this knowledge, and at the same time exaggerating her faults, armed against her this very sentiment, and with such success, that her approaching death, which had hitherto been the delightful allurements of her most joyful hopes, and loved incentive of every solid comfort, now suddenly became for Margaret an object of black horror. Recollecting the standard given her by the angel, she used it the more frequently as she was more terribly assailed by that fear.

In this way, God in his providence increased her merit through the grace of the sacraments, and purged her from all stain by the virtue of the saving laver of his Divine blood—an advantage which, converting into a conquest for Margaret these pretended triumphs of the devils, inflamed them still more with rage, and incited them to augment this harassing fear by the very

means by which she diminished it; giving her to understand that her multiplied confessions did not remove her stains, because she did not explain herself sufficiently nor feel due contrition.

Her loving Jesus interposed new shields to ward off this dart, which wounded most acutely the anguished heart of the disconsolate dying Saint. He sent back to her her good confessor Father Giunta, who, by the minute knowledge which he had of Margaret's whole life, aided her better to examine her whole conscience, and by the authority which he possessed over her, obtained greater credit than others in what he said, and by the tender devotion which he bore her, assisted her with more assiduity. To him then she could confess as much, and as she wished; and she confessed not only her daily faults, but still more, her old debauchery, with as much precision of detail, as much profuse weeping, as though she had never accused herself of them, nor repented of them. At his hands too, she could communicate with the frequency which she desired; and she wished it so frequently, that from the seventeenth of January till her death she received daily. And in these communions her Jesus was more liberal than ever, in loving colloquy, ecstatic ravishment, and



sweet consolation. On the Saturday after the Feast of St. Anthony, the Abbot, while after communion she was in a delicious ecstasy with her Jesus, she was heard breaking forth into this supplication: "Oh! cleanse me, my Jesus, from every ancient stain, preserve me from every new fall, and that I may never offend thee more, take me out of this world, and if it is thy will that I still remain here, grant me every day thy divine body, without which, I feel myself dying of wearisomeness."

Her holy angel, too, kindly came to calm her fears; he did so on Candlemas day, when besides what we mentioned in the preceding chapter, he exposed in a long conference the degrees of true love of God. In this conference and in the communion made a little before, such exceeding joy overflowed her heart, that the angel did not hesitate to assert that in that hour she enjoyed a foretaste of Paradise, granted to her by her Jesus, as a reward for her special love for chastity, and for her special reverence to him in his Sacrament.

This beautiful calm, however, lasted but a short time, it was soon disturbed by a darker tempest. When the angel departed, she examined herself on the three degrees of love explained by him; but seeming to herself not to have attained any of them her dark fears of

speedy death and menacing judgment, came furiously to agitate her. But they vanished as quickly as they were furious, dissipated by the master hand of Father Giunta, and then by a joyful vision that appeared to her. Her confessor encouraged her to rely entirely on the blood of her crucified Lord, who, by his merits, would supply all her deficiencies; and in the assistance of her patron saints, who would all hasten to introduce her into paradise. At this word *Paradise*, she was borne away from the senses, and beheld the divine Mother Mary in the act of beseeching Jesus to conduct Margaret quickly to heaven, and Jesus consent, regarding Margaret with a smiling countenance. This gracious smile of Jesus filled her heart with joy, certain that Jesus never shows a smiling countenance to one who is his enemy by sin.

But in this sweet joy the crafty demons did not long leave her. Lucifer sent a huge band of them from hell against her, to make their last effort to overcome her; and these all at once invested the poor dying Saint with a host of various temptations; but the one most urged was that of despair, bringing up all her old faults, never purged they said by her, because all penance was insufficient except the eternal pain of hell, adding that God had already condemned her to it, sur-

rendering her entirely to Lucifer, who, in the exercise of his authority, had brutally deceived her all through life, flattering her with deceitful apparitions, with lying assurances of pardon granted, of merits attained; that as she had ever served him, she should now go to him to join in cursing forever that God, who had irrevocably condemned her. In this terrible strait she did nothing but invoke her Jesus; and protest that in his blood, his merits alone, she placed her hopes, more certain of obtaining Paradise from his mercy, as she was of deserving hell from his justice. "He, he shall be my Savior."

And he was her Savior so graciously that he came in person to expel for ever from that cell all that insolent crew, and to reward the constancy of his Margaret with the announcement of the hour and moment, when he wished to introduce into heaven her triumphant soul, saying: "Daughter, fear no more the snares of the enemy; he flees away vanquished, and I shall ever be with thee: prepare to depart from this world; because during the present month of February on the twenty-second day thou shalt pass to heaven at dawn." Then she could exultingly answer with the Royal Psalmist: "Thou hast made with me a sign for good, that they who hate me may see

and be confounded : for thou, O Lord, hast helped and assisted me." \*

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### CHAPTER III.

#### HER DEATH AND BURIAL.

THE days which Margaret survived this happy announcement she spent, as far as the increasing bodily pain permitted, exulting in soul, and always absorbed in a most joyful ecstasy, which not only anticipated for her heart the joys of the saints in heaven, but even gave her body a hue of Paradise. Her countenance, which had been fleshless and cadaverous, now seemed fresh and ruddy; so that to judge by the complexion, she seemed rather a blooming maiden than a dying and exhausted woman. So judged in his admiration that devout Franciscan, Father Conrad, who, at the news of her mortal illness, set out anxiously, eager to see once more a Saint so dear to him; but failed to reach her before those days. This repute drew many others, Secular and Re-

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\* Fecisti mecum signum in bonum, ut videant qui oderunt me, et confundantur: quoniam tu Domine adjuvasti me, et consolatus es me.

gular, to Cortona; but more than the strangers did the grief-stricken Cortonese flock to the hut of their expiring Saint, all eager to relieve her wants and receive her last embraces. But as she was almost constantly in ecstatic colloquies with the citizens of heaven, she could give little ear to men on earth, and rejecting every restorative except the Sacrament of the Eucharist, she was unable to receive any assistance from them. Yet in those few moments when she was not rapt to heaven, she kindly replied to all, lovingly thanked all, encouraged all by asserting that the way of salvation was easy; filled all with fervor by saying, "Little children, love our Lord Jesus Christ:" and as an exercise of this love she enjoined the Cortonese to pluck out resolutely every germ of sedition, in order to perfect that concord so dearly purchased by her: "My little children, love one another; for this is the commandment of the Lord; if this be done, it suffices:"\* words ever imprinted in her heart, because they had ever been on the lips of her beloved Saint John, the Evangelist.

But with none did she converse with more cordial affection than with her venerated friars, who

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\* *Filioli mei diligite alterutrum; hoc enim præceptum Domini est: si hoc fiat, sufficit.*

had been so constant in directing her, so punctual in providing for her, so careful to defend her, and now so assiduous attending on her. The devout crowd, conscious of this debt of gratitude, flocked around to obtain the desired favor of being introduced to the bedside of their beloved Saint, some to recommend their necessities, others to receive her blessing, and others simply to see her; and the charitable Fathers satisfied them all in the most becoming manner.

In this way passed all these days. Towards evening on the last day of her life, Margaret asked Father Giunta to fortify her with Extreme Unction, which she then received with most fervent acts of devotion, and with most ardent affection for her God, melting into most devout tears, so as to make the bystanders also weep with compunction; and their grief became more bitter, when at the completion of the sacred rite, Margaret still weeping turned to them, and sighing asked pardon for all her past errors, and begged them not to refuse her as a last favor to thank God who had been so merciful to her. Then raised in most sublime contemplation, she passed the rest of that night relieving her ecstatic heart with her beloved patron saints, all descended from heaven to console her in her last agony, and welcome her blessed soul. Informed by

them that the longed for dawn was at hand, she again received absolution from her confessor, and also the holy Viaticum, and with it in her breast she expired exulting, and her exulting body remained with a beautiful smile on her lips. Thus smilingly she died, who had ever lived bewailing her sins. "Blessed are they that mourn."

At daybreak of the twenty-second of February in the year 1298, the twenty-third year of her conversion and the fiftieth of her age, Margaret accomplished, according to our Lord's prediction, the course of her painful mortal life, and began the never ending one of eternity: more glorious in heaven, as the former was more tried on earth, and the more adorned and rich in palms, as she was more exercised in battle. The glorious entrance of her disenthralled spirit into heaven was revealed by God to a venerable contemplative, then in the Citta di Castello, a not unfrequent home of heroic souls; and God ordered him to publish punctually all he saw for the glory of his new Magdalene. Obedient to this he declared that he had seen Margaret's soul, splendid in beauty, surrounded by hosts of blessed spirits, enter heaven, accompanied by multitudes of other souls delivered from Purgatory by her merits.

While this splendid triumph was solemnized in heaven, there was joy too in Margaret's poor cell, where her body, by the miraculous sweetness which it exhaled, produced in all hearts a devout exultation; and the sight of her cheerful and smiling countenance banished tears from every eye. Full of devotion and joy, her good companions began to lay out that sacred body, and clothe it in her beloved Tertiary habit. And thus attired the good friars, who jealously guarded it, were forced to expose it to the eyes and kisses of the crowds who gathered as the sad news of her death spread. Each one entered the cell as a sanctuary, and on beholding that beautiful countenance, was inflamed with love for God and hatred for sin; the kisses imprinted on those hands and feet could not satisfy this childlike devotion; and as none felt reluctant to approach, all grieved to tear themselves away. Without the house the swaying crowd of afflicted people inconsolably bewailed her loss, deploring, some the supplier of their wants, others their consoler in trouble, the healer of their maladies, the revealer of their secrets, their mistress, their soul of souls. But she, by new consolation which she infused into their hearts, by new compunction which she excited in their minds, gave all secure tokens of that better patronage which



they would eternally possess at her hands in heaven.

Meanwhile the higher magistrates of the city, to return by public honors the public debt contracted by all towards Margaret, decreed that her body should be embalmed, and invested in precious purple: that it should be accompanied to the church by all the secular and regular clergy, the magistrates and the nobility, and after a sumptuous funeral, should be laid in a sepulchre newly opened for her. The decree was received with applause, and was carried out with joy; but when they came to the interment, then all opposed and resisted, so that the body had to be left unburied for several days, exhaling constantly that odor of Paradise, and diffusing miraculous graces, which daily increased the concourse, and thereby the difficulty of interring it. But the good friars, anxiously fearful lest it should be taken from their hands, secured it only by force and by favor of night, when they deposited that dear pledge entire, well sealed to prevent doubt, in the appointed sepulchre within the oratory, erected by Margaret herself in honor of Saint Basil. Here by the trump of astonishing miracles, God soon declared, that of Marga-

ret's too had he said by the lips of Isaias, "And her sepulchre shall be glorious."\*

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## CHAPTER IV.

### THE VENERATION FOR HER BODY AND ITS INCORRUPT STATE.

THE oratory of Saint Basil soon became a beautiful image of the ancient Probatice, for as in that magnificent porch in Jerusalem, "there was a great multitude of sick waiting for the moving of the water,"† so to those sacred walls flocked daily all kinds of sick and ailing, in secure expectation that Margaret, moved by their fervent supplications, would obtain them relief in their distress; and so soon did her wonder-working power obtain it, that none went away disappointed, or not obliged to leave some gift as an authentic document of gratitude to his glorious patroness.

It is not clear from ancient documents whether her first tomb was above or under ground; but it is certain that then, or a few years after, a large

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\* Et erit sepulchrum ejus gloriosum.

† John v. 3.

vault was opened in the wall of that oratory like a closet, and in it was inserted an iron chase grated in front, in which that fragrant and incorrupt body was placed, protected by glass, which, preserving it from the dust, enabled the devout pilgrims from that and other parts to see it; and as their veneration constantly increased, they kept adorning it with richer ornaments. Among others, they erected over this chase a magnificent marble shrine, such as is now seen in the same oratory, where it has stood in the sacristy for more than a century. The sculpture and painting of the shrine are Gothic. The bass reliefs on the exterior portray: first, her taking the habit of Tertiary; second, her stripping herself of her own clothes to cover a poor woman; third, the assurance given her by Jesus of the predestination of her son; fourth, her funeral rendered glorious by the cure of the possessed and the sick. The interior is also adorned with bass reliefs, in which you behold the statue of the Saint sculptured of natural size, lying beneath a pavilion of marble, supported by two angels with two columns, over which is the Annunciation of Our Lady; and it terminates above in two pyramidal arches in Gothic form. The sides of the shrine are adorned with paintings: that on the right being Jesus in the act of bless-

ing; that on the left Mary with the infant Jesus in her arms.

But as devotion to Margaret increased daily, with it grew the desire of all to see without any obstacle, and to touch that beautiful and palpable body. Accordingly, the deputies, to meet the general desire, on the 25th of July, 1546, extracted the undecayed body from the ancient chase; and cleansing it from all dust, covered it with new attire, and replaced it in such a way that they could easily take it out and expose it freely to the eyes and hands of the more fervent and loving clients.

In this state the venerated body continued till the last day of the year 1580, when with sumptuous pomp, and devotion still more pompous, it was by a public decree translated to the high altar of the neighboring noble church, in honor of Margaret, begun by the Cortonese the very year of her blessed death, afterwards consecrated and opened by an indult of Boniface VIII, and finally, with the approbation of Eugene IV, given and ceded to the Observantine Fathers on the following occasion.

There came to revere the tomb of his most beloved Margaret, that worthy son of Saint Francis, that miraculous apostle of Italy, that renowned glorifier of the holy name of Jesus,

the great Saint Bernardine of Siena. The Cortonese, knowing his great zeal, begged him to exercise it among them by his fervid preaching, to which he assented the more readily, as it seemed to him an offering in honor of his beloved sister and venerated protectress, Margaret; and to render them dearer to her, he rendered them more like her in love to Jesus, when by his preaching he excited in their hearts love equal to the ardent love which burned in his own beautiful heart. Yet he did not appear altogether satisfied: he longed to leave the body of his beloved Saint in a more becoming place. Seeing the good people docile to his insinuations, he one day told them modestly, that it seemed to him improper to keep so confined the body of that saint, whom God daily exalted by the glory of numerous prodigies: that they should for the present transfer it to their new church, and confide the direction of it permanently to his companions, who having become more accurate observers of the Seraphic Institute, bore the cherished name of "Observantines." A step so advantageous to the honor of their Saint met all applause from those pious men, and they immediately prepared the high altar of that church for the purpose, decreeing, that when all was ready, the translation should be made with all

the splendor of torches and tapers, which was not effected before the last day of the year 1580, as we have stated.

Even after the sumptuous translation, the piety of the Cortonese burnt more brightly, and they continued to adorn that altar, placing more securely that precious treasure which constantly remained incorrupt and fragrant. In Margaret the flesh had been the instrument of signal virtues, and hence God wished this fragrance as a reward to remain communicated for several centuries to one of the places consecrated by Margaret's abode, which afterwards became a convent of Franciscan Nuns of the Third Order, who under the title of St. Jerome cloistered themselves as faithful companions to Margaret, not merely in dress, but still more in interior virtues. These deposed in the judicial process, that in their courtyard where Margaret's hut had stood, they constantly perceived a fragrance inexplicable to them, of great relief to the senses, and still greater aid to the spirit, which it raised to God and inflamed with piety; so that they all held it in special reverence, never attempting to pass it except on their knees or barefoot, and many also perceived it in their oratory, and continued there ecstatic whole nights, partaking of the fervor once kindled there in Margaret's noble heart.

But still more durable and sweeter has been the fragrance, which this body preserves with its incorruption: famous marks, which within a few years the Holy See has sent reliable ministers to ascertain and examine; for when their royal highnesses of Tuscany made the most earnest appeals to that Pontiff, Benedict XIII, to canonize solemnly the venerated heroine of their states, the Holy Father dispatched for this purpose to Cortona that illustrious client of Margaret, and shining light of Holy Church, Cardinal Corradini. On the twenty-third of January, 1724, after consoling his devotion by long prayer and the celebration of Mass before that blessed chace, having caused it to be opened he instantly perceived that heavenly fragrance; and among other bystanders, it was perceived by the most eminent Crescenzi, then Secretary of the Sacred Rites, and having carefully examined the sacred body, he found it somewhat stiffened by time, less discolored by death, and not at all touched by corruption. Then taking the glass urn in which were deposited the parts removed at the time of the embalming, he found this incorrupt and unaltered; and the Cardinal, presenting it to the light, saw that the humor in the interior had dissolved into a rosy liquor, the rest remaining in its natural dense and solid state. When this was

reported and discussed in the full Congregation of Rites, it was considered by all, as it really was, a most signal miracle, our Lord having ordained that, as he had rendered her soul so like his own, her body too should partake the resemblance, fulfilling his own prediction: "Thou wilt not permit thy Holy one to see corruption."



## BOOK III.—CONTINUED.

## MIRACLES WROUGHT BY SAINT MARGARET.



## CHAPTER V.

## HER MIRACLES AT CORTONA.

LIBERAL as were the Cortonese ever in their homage to Margaret, she has been more lavish of miraculous favors; as a loving mother gives more caresses to her beloved child than she receives. She performed not a few of these miracles while still alive, but some were concealed by her humility. They remained unknown from the carelessness of others in observing and recording them. But the resuscitation of a dead child was so wonderful, that it could neither be concealed by Margaret nor dissembled by others. An unfortunate woman found her child dead in bed, and was the more horror-struck as she deemed herself guilty; she ran in tears to implore Margaret's aid, that wonted refuge of the

afflicted. Moved by her tears and prayers, Margaret raised her eyes to God, and then said: "Go home cheerfully, you will find your child alive and well," and so she found him to her great delight; which made not only the neighborhood but all Cortona join in exultation.

Equally notorious and wonderful were many other miracles wrought after her entrance into heaven. These shall be the subject of this chapter and the next. The most ancient of these were examined rigorously by several bishops; and then after a new discussion were authenticated by Cardinal Napoleon Orsini, Legate Apostolic. The more recent ones were presented to the Holy See in the process of her canonization, so that there is no room for any man, not rash and incredulous, to doubt.

In the present account, I shall, in order the better to conform to the gratitude of Margaret's most loving heart, prefer to more ancient ones, a miracle that happened to an ancestress of a noble Cortonese family, a scion of which now, by the common consent, bears away the palm for laborious efforts to exalt the name, multiply the clients, and increase throughout the world the honors of their beloved Protectress.

Signora Costanza Angelieri Alticosi was a lady devoted to piety even in the married state,

that she not unfrequently was favored with heavenly apparitions; she was reduced to extremity by an asthma so malignant, that growing daily worse, it seemed to find aliment in the very remedies used to check it, like those poisonous plants which turn heaven's choicest dews to venom. Her disconsolate husband, Signor Bernardino Orselli, advised her to have recourse to their most benign Margaret, who had ever shown herself propitious in every calamity: the devout lady obeyed, and the benign Saint heard her more condescendingly than ever. She appeared visibly, and with an air of majesty and affability approaching the bed was about to open her breast to clear the impeded course of respiration. But the good lady, fearing lest the devil had come under an assumed form to delude her, as he had already done before, appearing in the form of Saint Francis, she repelled from her the heavenly physician; and recommended herself earnestly to God, but recollecting that that vile demon concealed beneath his friar's gown the unshapen limbs of a beast, to recognize him now again by the same sign, she raised the garments. Assured by Margaret with solid proof, she allowed herself to be cured, and the cure was performed thus: the Saint opened her breast, and with a ladle which she held in her right hand extracted

much putrid blood, and poured it into a basin which she held in her left hand ; then she closed the breast, blessed her, and vanished from her sight, leaving her in perfect health. Regret at this sudden departure, and joy at recovering her health, caused Costanza to utter a loud cry, which heard with amazement by the husband, who had gone a little while before into another apartment to draw, made him run back in wonder--a wonder that soon gave place to joy, on hearing from his wife an account of what had happened, and seeing the manifest effects in her free breathing, in her clear voice, in her fresh color and vigorous strength. Both extolled the miraculous delivery, in honor of which they had the gracious prodigy announced by the preacher in the church on the first festival. The prodigy was continued so constantly by Margaret in her client, that she was never again troubled by the disease.

Shortly after the death of his great penitent, another lady attested to Father Giunta, that she had been afflicted by a rupture of the abdomen, to which the physicians with all their remedies could give no relief ; but that she was suddenly cured on her invoking her beloved Margaret, who, drying up the ulcer that had formed, closed the wound entirely.

A child named Bartoluccio, five years old,

being alone near a mill, began, as children will, to examine all around, and without perceiving it was caught by a wheel, which catching him in its cogs so tore him, that the poor little fellow was crushed in every part of his body, and his eyes forced out of their sockets. The neighbors ran up at his cries, and although they stopped the wheel as quick as they could, the child was so injured that it was about to expire. At this sight the afflicted mother invoked her Margaret to whom she was signally devout, and promised by vow to visit her altar, and leave a gift there, if she restored her child; and Margaret immediately gave back the little one so sound, that by the testimony of all the astonished bystanders there was not the least sign of wound or fracture in its body.

Baccia, daughter of John Baptist Zefferini, gave herself in her youth so indiscreetly to the spiritual life and to austerity, as to ruin her constitution. All the vigor of her body was prostrated, and her head was so injured that only by the greatest difficulty was she able to remain for a short time out of bed. Being in this state on the annual Feast of St. Margaret, and unable to satisfy her devotion, yet longing to drag herself to venerate the tomb, she endeavored in her honor to reach the nearest church, to

hear mass and receive. While praying fervently near an altar of that church, Margaret appeared to her, and touching her lightly on the head, said: "There, Baccia, thou art cured, be grateful to God." This sight, these words filled her with great joy that those near could not but perceive. They asked the reason, and they too exulted, on hearing, or rather on beholding with their own eyes that sudden miracle, which not only filled her mind with joy, but gave strength to her body. Baccia, in acknowledgment for the favor, retired to a monastery, where she so piously employed her recovered health, that she lived and died in great repute for sanctity with her religious sisters.

A lady called Bruna had a son strangely wounded in the leg; having used in vain all the prescriptions of the learned, she turned to Margaret's miraculous patronage, promising by vow to visit her altar if she delivered her son. Margaret heard her promptly; but the mother did not as promptly keep her promise, so that her breach of faith deprived her of the grace, and all the dried up sores of her son re-opened. The penitent mother wept with real sorrow, and to repair her error, repeated her promise, and Margaret renewed the favor, but with no better success than before; because not even

then did the giddy woman keep her vow and promise. Then to her greater pain the sores opened all worse than ever; and the mother's mouth re-opened to broken promises. Comforted for the third time by the compassionate Margaret, she at last overcome her obstinacy, ran to the altar, bearing her son, and proclaimed to all, not only Margaret's condescensions, but her own obstinate and wicked ingratitude.

An incurable rupture kept a man named Buzio in perpetual anguish; and urged more by pain than by his friends to appeal to Margaret, he commended himself to her, and soon found himself perfectly healed; as all who had visited and attended him attested under oath.

A child named Marcuccio, aged five years and three months, suffered terribly from gravel; his afflicted mother vowed him to Margaret, and the child immediately passed a great quantity of blood, which permanently delivered it from the disease.

Some Cortonese merchants being at sea, a fierce tempest arose, the captain lost heart, and ordered the cargo to be thrown over to lighten the ship. At this terrible order the merchants fervently implored their great Protectress; and she suddenly dispersed the winds, calmed the sea, and preserved all from destruction.

While some shepherds of Cortona were feeding their flocks on the Tuscan shore, a furious torrent threatened to sweep away their flocks: falling on the ground they all promised the Saint to visit her tomb if she preserved them from those waters, and immediately the torrent deviated from its course.

Father Guido da Cortona was crossing Lake Thrasymene, commonly called Lago di Perugia, in a small boat alone, when it suddenly capsized, and he sank, his bark passing over him. In this great risk, the name of his Patroness, more deeply engraven in his heart than any other, came suddenly to his lips: he invoked Margaret, and she delivered him from those depths, restored him to his bark, and guided him in it safely to the shore.

Thirteen years after Margaret's death, there happened in the district of Cortona this stupendous case. In the city of Casale a young man named Naldo was in the fields herding his master Nuzio's cattle; these suddenly took to headlong flight: despairing of ever taking them, full of fury and rage, he called the devil to his aid, and the devil came, and led him off to unknown spots. Meanwhile evening came, and the cattle came back to their usual stalls, but without the shepherd. As he did not make his appearance the next morning, Nuzio, in great anxiety, searched



all the neighboring forest, but neither found Naldo nor any one able to give any account of him. He continued his search next day, and then at last found him for dead near some bushes. He took him up in his arms to carry him home and restore him, but on reaching a ditch full of water, the spirit wrested Naldo from his arms and hurled him into the water to drown him; Nuzio, aided by his companions, soon got him out, but knew by such an incident that the wretched youth had been seized by a devil. Good Nuzio, by the strength of his faith, compelled the malignant spirit to tell when and how he would be dislodged from that body, and he said that he would not leave it till the youth was presented at Margaret's tomb. Nuzio, not relying much on this promise, insisted on having some less deceptive token: then the devil raised the left hand of the possessed one, as a sign that he bound himself to keep his promise; but Nuzio was not satisfied, and the devil, unable to deceive the lively faith of that simple countryman, said, that on leaving the young man he would spit out of his mouth a black coal, and he raised the right hand as a sign. Nuzio, now impatient to deliver the boy, carried him without any further delay to the tomb, where he soon beheld fulfilled by Margaret the promise reluctantly

forced from the devil. The rescued youth ever after had such a horror of his name that it never came to his lips.

A child was born at Cerreto, a place near Cortona, with an eye so misformed, that instead of a pupil there was only a piece of flesh. A grown up sister implored Margaret's aid, and the eye soon appeared in its natural state, clearer even than the other, as the consoled parents found by repeated experiments. As soon as they could, they came to Cortona to thank their Benefactress, and attest the fact under oath.

In the Castello di S. Marco, belonging to Cortona, a large tumor formed in the throat of a child two years old. Its poor mother employed in vain all human remedies, and was in great fear of losing him, as she had already lost another child by the same disorder, and at the same age. She recommended him to Margaret, and before she had ended her prayer, she beheld her fears dissipated, the obstinate tumor having broken and happily discharged all its virulent matter.

Don Matteo, a monk of Monte Cassino, of the princely family of Venosa, stopped to pass the night at the inn of Camucia, less than a mile distant from Cortona: but instead of rest found only mortal pain. An habitual infirmity, aggravated by his journey, which obedience alone had

imposed, returned so violently that night, that being now a man in years he expected every moment to die in spasms, especially as the place and the time afforded him no chance of physician or medicine. The vicinity to Cortona gave him faith in Saint Margaret, and commending himself to her with all his heart, he felt his pain assuaged, the obstruction removed, and the disorder so vanish, that by morning he was able not only to leave his bed, but to go to the church of his Deliverer and celebrate Mass in thanksgiving.

A stout youth of the mountains of Cortona was seized with a violent disorder in the very bloom of life, and cut off in a few days. His mother was inconsolable in her grief, but remembering Margaret's prodigious miracles, she conceived so ardent a faith in her, that before her petition was concluded, she beheld her son rise from the dead. Rising from the bier he ran to embrace his mother, and, more than his mother, to thank and bless the wonderful Margaret. To publish her renown and increase the number of her clients, he went around showing himself as a trophy of the great power of her intercession with God.

In the same mountains an epidemic had so seized and distorted a poor woman, that she had

lain for seven years motionless on her bed, completely resigned to God's will, and ready to leave it only to be borne to the grave. Hearing of the wondrous miracles wrought by Margaret, it seemed to her that her cramped body was a better subject than any other on which to exercise her great power; and cheered by sudden confidence, she made a vow that her first steps should be to visit her church and throw herself at her sepulchre. She had scarcely pronounced the vow, when she was called upon to fulfil it, Margaret having suddenly loosed her limbs and quickened them with vigor. Then she ran to Cortona, where she satisfied her devotion, and then by a solemn deposition left the great prodigy attested.

But it would be endless merely to enumerate the countless number of Cortonese signally benefitted in every age by their Margaret. Suffice it to say, that as there was not a house there not full of devotion to her, so there was not a person whom she did not graciously relieve. In fact, not satisfied with rewarding the public devotion of her Cortonese by private graces, she also frequently bestowed public and universal favors. Such certainly was that in 1529, when there appeared before Cortona, to demand its surrender, the powerful army commanded by Philibert,

Prince of Orange, as fatal to Rome, which it sacked, as to Florence, which it subdued. The Cortonese had only two companies of soldiers in their pay: nevertheless, encouraged by their fidelity, and trusting to the protection of their Saint, they refused to surrender and assumed the defensive. The furious prince at once surrounded it with twenty-five thousand soldiers, and raised a strong battery at St. Vincent's. But fruitless was every blow, vain every assault; Margaret passing visibly along the walls to encourage the defenders and repel the assailants. At last the enemy, despairing of handling the booty which they had promised themselves from the sack, raised the siege, and more like a vanquished than a victorious army, abandoned Cortona, which, like favored Olympus, stood serene while fierce whirlwinds ravaged the fields and mounts less dear to heaven. From her happy heights she could look calmly down on the ruin, desolation, and ravages wreaked by the fury of that army on every other country not equally protected by Margaret; to whom, in grateful return for the signal exemption which they had enjoyed, they had more reason than ever to exclaim in the words of Ecclesiasticus: "Thou hast delivered me, according to the multitude of the mercy of thy name, from them that did roar, prepared to de-

vour, and from the gates of afflictions that compassed me about." Eccles. li. 4, 5.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### HER MIRACLES IN OTHER PLACES.

A PARTY of pilgrims had for many days journeyed happily towards the Holy Land; they embarked together at Ancona, but the winds became so contrary and the sea so tempestuous, that they had to yield to the tempest and take a direction far from their due course. So obstinate was the pertinacity of the winds, and so far from every port the course they had taken, that the passengers consumed all their provisions and were about to die of hunger, obeying the sport of the winds, or opposing them, be overwhelmed in those billows. To escape so fearful an alternative, the confused mariners made many a vow, and all the alarmed passengers implored their patron saints; but the sea raged more furiously than ever, and the winds made fiercer war; hope vanished, and only agonizing life was left flickering. Through Margaret's favor, hope suddenly revived, and each one gained new life.

Among the passengers was one from Laviano, Margaret's birthplace; and recollecting that he had with him some relics of his venerated countrywoman, he took them out of his chest, exposed them to the veneration of all, then held them up to the wind, which immediately from contrary became favorable, and bore the ship so quickly to the long sought harbor, that the astounded sailors attested that for twenty-five years that they had followed the sea, they had never made so short a trip.

A sanguinary malefactor was captured at Monte Pulciano, and having been convicted of his crimes, was sentenced to pay the next morn the deserved penalty at the hands of the ministers of justice. He was kept guarded that night by additional keepers, and closely ironed; seeing all human succor desperate, he tried heaven by means of Margaret. He implored her then, that as she had escaped eternal death in that city by the sudden rending of her sinful ties, so she should deliver him from temporal death by taking him out of prison and loosing his fetters. A prayer so bold, from a heart so wicked, undoubtedly did not deserve a hearing, yet Margaret kindly listened, and he found himself out of prison with the fetters on his feet. He immediately proceeded to Cortona, and melting with

compunction and devotion, he prostrated himself at the altar of his gracious Deliverer, and there left not only the chains of his body but also those of his soul, having contritely confessed his sins and begun a new life.

She wrought a similar prodigy in Citta di Castello with thirty capital delinquents, incarcerated together in the same dungeon. They had recourse to Margaret's protection, and beheld her open the door, loose their fetters, and set them free. A prodigy which, divulged by them through all the country, enkindled everywhere great love to Margaret, who was so affectionate even to sinners.

Five years after Margaret's death, in the month of June, Signor Ridolfuccio of Arezzo was reduced to the last agony, when his wife made a vow to Margaret to visit her tomb and clothe one of the poor people attending there, if she cured her husband. Then lo! he opened his eyes, and turning to his wife, said in a sonorous voice, "Be consoled, to-morrow I shall be well: two saints have appeared and so promised." The event verified it, so that he went with his wife to Cortona to fulfil the vow.

A gentleman of Arezzo was treating with some desperadoes to mangle and slay a rival, but, in punishment for his perverse design, nearly



became himself a victim to death. While eating some fish eagerly, a bone stuck so firm in his throat that all remedy failed to remove it. He then turned to Margaret, and to propitiate her, swore to give immediate peace to his enemy, and to go bare-footed to her grave, when suddenly Margaret, to the amazement of all the bystanders, made him spit out that short bone.

Another man, called from his native place Aretino, while leaning on the edge of a well, it suddenly gave way and he fell into the water; he raised his mind to Margaret, and she rescued him from the double danger of the fall and of being drowned; for when his friends had almost drawn him out with a rope, it broke, and he was again precipitated into the well to be again rescued by Margaret.

In Monte di Santa Maria, a free feud of the noble house Borbone, a child five years old fell from a high window, and striking with his head on a stone, the brains issued from the fracture, which was so large that three fingers could be inserted in it. The unfortunate child lay without a sign of life from midday to midnight: then a sudden internal impulse came to the mother to vow herself and her child to Margaret. She embraced the inspiration with great faith, and the child immediately spoke, and ran to the bosom

of its astonished mother, with the wound entirely dry and healed, so that she could at once bear him to Cortona to fulfill the vow, and attest the instantaneous and total cure.

At Citerna, a hamlet near that mountain, a child was born deaf and dumb, and so remained to the age of five years. Then a similar inspiration induced both its parents to have recourse to Margaret; they obeyed it, and the child's ears were instantly opened, and its tongue loosed. It called its father by name, and he with the mother bore it in their arms to Cortona to magnify their prodigious Benefactress and Comforter.

A lady of Citta di Castello had, for several hours, lain in labor, and all the means of art had been in vain employed to deliver her, so that the physicians gave her up; but she did not despair of Margaret, her special Protectress. Recurring to her with fervor, she at once gave birth to a fine, healthy child.

Another lady of the same place had a beloved son grievously ill, and as she was fondly attached to him, could not bring herself to be deprived of him: and, rendered more devout by her great love, she prayed Margaret fervently, and was immediately consoled, the sickness disappearing.

In the same city a malignant fluxion of the eyes entirely blinded Signora Altavilla Finette.

After being thus blind several days, she implored Margaret's assistance ; and at once recovered her sight better than before.

A woman there, too, named Superchia, had a son called Balduccio, in whom a rupture exhibited symptoms more and more aggravated ; unable to try any more human remedies, the poor mother turned to Margaret's superhuman power, and obtained a cure so complete that no sign of the previous disease appeared.

The pastor of San Sevino, in the diocese of the same city, deposed on oath, that a servant of Signora Benvenuta, residing in his parish, was in great risk of his life by a swelling and inflammation of the throat, and that he recovered as soon as his mother vowed him to Margaret.

At Crociano, in the diocese of Perugia, a sick man, in the delirium caused by fever, so badly wounded his eye as to put it out : the physicians used every effort to subdue the fever and restore the eye, but in vain. He promised Margaret to visit her tomb and light ten tapers in her honor, and was immediately delivered from all his troubles, so that he was able to get up, prepare food, take it with great relish, and start for Cortona.

A brutal man named Giannino, near the last named place, furious against his child three years old, snatched it from his wife's arms and stran-

gled it, so that the blood gushed from his mouth, nose, and eyes. At this lamentable sight the inhuman father grew more savage, dashed it on the ground, and threw himself on his knees upon it, and seeing it finally crushed, took flight to escape the hands of justice. The afflicted mother, fearful of publishing by her tears the horrid crime of her husband, took up, with suppressed sobs, the unconscious little body, and laid it in a place concealed from all but her grief. Three days after, impelled by the accounts of prodigies which all were relating of Margaret's miracles, she promised to visit her tomb barefooted and clothed in sackcloth, if her son was restored, and her husband saved; and full of faith she went to see the hidden body of her murdered child; and found him not only alive, but without a sign of that barbarous cruelty.

The daughter in law of Guido della Cornià, a gentleman of Perugia, lost a child by the same disease which had taken off two other children of hers while yet at the breast. She made a fervent vow to Margaret to visit the altar, and her child suddenly came to life.

Signora Gualdrata Magalotti della Penna, possessed for many years by the spirits, suffered such persecutions from them, that she was often found at the point of death; she too vowed to

Margaret to visit her altar clad in hair-cloth; on this she was suddenly freed, and delivered forever from the painful vexations of those demons.

Simoncello Angelucci of Perugia attested, with a solemn oath, that a painful tumor formed under his chin, which no surgeon could cure; but that on his invoking Margaret and promising to visit her tomb every year, the pain and tumor instantly disappeared.

A boy, residing in the larger island in the Lago di Perugia, had a still worse swelling in his mouth, so that he was compelled to keep his tongue hanging out of his lips. His uncle Giacopello, after trying every remedy, determined to show it to a skillful physician, then in Cortona. While on his way to him with his nephew, he reached a hill, from which descrying the church of St. Margaret, he prostrated himself and promised to visit her tomb if the boy was cured.

After his prayer, he stopped at a wayside inn to refresh his nephew, and he was not only able to swallow food, but drew in his tongue and kept it in its natural position. The careless uncle did not as quickly correspond to this prompt grace; for on entering Cortona, instead of going to fulfill the promise to Margaret, he went to the physician's house and remained till evening. In the night the boy's disorder returned worse than

ever, and while the uncle was busy preparing to get a new prescription of the doctor's, the lad implored his former Benefactress, and beheld her appear and cure him perfectly with her own hand, so that when day came he was able to go to the church and fulfill his vow.

Margaret bestowed a similar favor a few years after her death on a noble youth, Signor di Bifolio, who was very devout to her in life. His tongue became so swollen that the physicians feared he would suffocate, and had determined to perform a painful operation. Fearing this, the sick man commended himself to his revered Margaret to preserve him from the dreaded remedy. While thus praying, he fell asleep, and on awaking, found the swelling gone and all his strength restored.

Clara, daughter of Nicholas and Jane Martini, from the valley of Zoca in the county of Perugia, was so seized by devils at the age of three years and six months, that they prevented every motion of the body necessary either to make the sign of the Cross, or perform any other action of piety, and they even deprived her eyes of sight. Her parents finally resolved to take her to Margaret's tomb, and at the mere threat the terrified demons suddenly abandoned the child, restoring sight to her eyes, and motion to her limbs.

Nevertheless her pious parents proceeded to Cortona to thank their Benefactress, and to give an authentic testimony of the cure effected.

One Magio of Antria, in the diocese of Perugia, was horribly tormented by the stone: he vowed to visit her church, and to light before her altar as many candles as his poverty permitted; and immediately passed three stones, each capable of causing death by convulsions.

A priest of Viano, in the diocese of Chiusi, reduced to agony by the same malady, was instantly cured of the malady by Margaret's intercession.

A woman named Letitia, of St. Agatha, in the diocese of Perugia, had been for four years paralyzed in most of her body. She at last resolved to appeal to Margaret, and vowing to visit her tomb, was suddenly straightened, and her limbs so relaxed that she was able, without any difficulty, to fulfil her vow.

Guido, of Plano di Carpi, in the same diocese, on coming out of church was treacherously assailed by an unknown hand, which, dealing him a fierce blow in the right eye, blinded him. For more than three months he tried the best remedies of art, and invoked every powerful protector in heaven, but with no fruit, except that of constant patience in his great misfortune. He, too,

finally implored Margaret, promising to visit her tomb and present her with tapers, and his eye was immediately cured.

A child was born in the territory of Pierlo, not only deprived of sight, but of any organization for sight, and remained so for about twenty days; the afflicted mother bound herself to take him to Cortona, if Margaret supplied the defect of nature. The child began all at once to open its eyelids, and display clear and beautiful its miracle-given eyes.

A child of Signora Nuta, wife of Accorso of Lucignano, running around the house found a sword, and going to his little brother's cradle, began to play with him, but struck him and so wounded the child, that it was swimming in its own blood. Some hours after, the mother, going there to nurse it, beheld the sad spectacle, and filled with horror, suddenly implored Margaret, promising to carry it herself to her tomb, and there dedicate it to her on her altar, if she would deign to restore it. Her prayer was scarcely ended, when the wounds disappeared, and the child, turning its eye, saw the nurse, and smilingly took its usual food.

Another child, falling from a window into the street, struck its head so severely on the stones, that both its eyes were forced cut, and it was left



more dead than dying. At this sight the devout mother vowed her child to Margaret, and protested aloud her belief that she should receive her son sound from her, and she did in fact at once receive him perfectly healed; for rising to its feet, it ran speedily to its mother's bosom, and she, to fulfil her promise and keep her vow, faithfully carried it to the tomb.

A girl in the territory of Assisi, more mad than silly, tore off all clothes put on her, and committed other insane freaks, without any one being able to manage or correct her. The disconsolate parents, with great difficulty, took her to Margaret's tomb in Cortona, and there soon found that comfort for themselves, that sense for their daughter, which they had in vain sought in other sanctuaries.

Another lady of Pozzuolo, called Bennesai, had, by a catarrh, lost the use of her right hand, horribly distorted, and the use of one leg, which remained paralyzed and useless. Both were suddenly cured on her making a vow to Margaret.

A son of Signora Margaret Sassi of Bulgarelli, being a mere child, found in a closet some poison set there to destroy rats, and thinking it some exquisite delicacy, swallowed it stealthily with great gusto. Some hours after, signs of the poison appeared in a burning fever, and excruciating

pains in the bowels, and in strange wanderings of the head. The physicians employed every antidote, but with so little fruit that they agreed in declaring that their little patient would soon die, or would survive an idiot. At so terrible a prospect, the mother was inflamed with confidence in Margaret; she implored her aid with great affection. She obtained it so speedily that the child suddenly found itself restored in mind and body. To correspond better to Margaret, by a good use of the life which was her boon, he resolved to employ it entirely in the service of God, under the guidance of the patriarch Saint Dominic, among whose no less holy than learned sons, he begged to be enrolled and preserved till death.

An incurable contagious disorder prevailed among children at Ragusa, in Dalmatia, when the vessel of the pilgrims, mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, touched there. One of them, a devout countryman of Margaret's, called Bartholomew Mantellato, while walking through the streets, met a very pious Ragusan gentleman, by name Michael, who, among his many exercises of piety, was accustomed to welcome to his home all pilgrims for the Holy Land. He conversed with Bartholomew, and obliged him, with his companions, to stay in his house.

While they were one morning breakfasting with him, good Bartholomew began to speak of the virtues and miracles of Margaret. At these stupendous narratives, and hearing from Bartholomew that he had with him some relics of the Saint's hair, he took the reliquary and ran to the hospital where a little son of his, two years old, lay expiring of the epidemic. On applying the holy relic, it was re-animated at once, and rose from the bed perfectly healed, to the great joy of Michael and of Bartholomew, who exulted to see his Saint glorified, even in that strange land, and extend her liberality to that kind host.

A little girl, playing through the house, ran a spindle so deep into her foot that the point stuck out. Her uncle Galliero, an experienced surgeon, could not extract it. His wife, seeing the case desperate, implored the aid of Margaret, of whom she was a special client, and while recommending her niece to her, she suddenly thought of applying a plaster of little or no avail for the purpose. Taking it, however, for an inspiration, she prepared it, and on applying it, saw to her double wonder, the stubborn point come out, not from the mouth of the wound, but from a sound part, which opened to give passage to the piece of wood and then close, retaining only a slight

mark as an authentic monument of Margaret's great prodigy.

Father Francis di Colle, of the order of Minors, suffered greatly in 1614, from a putrid tumor in his foot brought on by erysipelas, and could not heal by it by all the appliances of art. An operation alone remained to be tried, but no surgeon durst attempt it, for fear of leaving him more maimed than before. While one day alone in bed in this state, he fervently commended himself to Margaret, and felt an internal impulse to open the tumor himself: unbinding his foot, he took a knife and was about to thrust it in, but stopped alarmed at the danger: at last an outward impulse from some unseen agent led his hand to cut, and did it so nicely that the tumor discharged all its malignant humor, and he was soon perfectly well.

Gilbert Venuti of Cignano, in the diocese of Borgo San Sepolcro, suffered excruciating pain in a leg which was broken by a fall and never would join. He made a vow to visit Margaret's tomb and leave a gift: and that very instant his pain ceased, his leg joined, and he felt so vigorous that without any trouble he walked to Cortona to venerate the blessed shrine. As I aspire to end my days with heart prostrated before it, so with it I end the present chapter, which by

its favors recounted will perpetually assure the readers that he who trusts in Margaret is never deluded: "Let them hope in Thee who have known thy name: for thou hast not forsaken them that seek thee."

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## CHAPTER VII.

### MORE RECENT MIRACLES.

AS no age ever dawned more redounding to Margaret's glory than this (the 18th), so never was a time more fortunate for her clients, on whom she diffuses such a copious shower of graces, that we may say not an hour passes that they do not receive some signal favor either in the relief of the afflicted body or the comfort of the anguished soul, as appears in the innumerable spoils of deaths conquered, sickness dispelled, disasters averted, happiness obtained, and in the *ex votos* true trophies of her boundless power daily hung up at her altar, sure defence against all miseries, prompt source of all content. Of the many thus expelled by her gracious prodigies, I select here for repetition only those authentic cases, which were discussed by the Holy See, and approved prior to the definitive decree of her solemn canonization.

In the early part of January, 1716, Mary Catharine Fabri, a child three years old, born in Cortona, was suddenly surprised by a paralysis of the whole right side of her body, and two days after of the left also, to which the malady extended; and so violently that becoming a perfect paralytic, she entirely lost speech, sense, motion, and all power of standing on her feet. As her tender age did not allow the more violent remedies of art, the most suitable were applied by a skillful physician, Doctor Mario Ciarpallini; but to so little purpose that the disease gained ground, and in spite of all the correctives, the patient kept going from bad to worse. The doctor, despairing of the case, gave her up telling the disconsolate parents that the child would soon die, or be a cripple all her life; and she remained in this helpless state for three months, when at the instance of some nuns, the mother, with great faith, invoked the intercession of Saint Margaret, promising by vow to robe her child in the Tertian color if she recovered: and the better to dispose herself to receive the grace, giving her child to a servant, she took it herself, with her two other children, to the high altar of the Saint. And having received communion before it, she begged Father Pellegrino, an Observantine, to anoint her child with the

oil of the lamp. The good religious did so at once, and laying the child on the altar, anointed it in the form of the cross on her forehead, temples, and feet, praying himself in union with that devout mother. As he finished the unction, all the child's difficulties disappeared, it suddenly recovered all its lost senses; and having been taken down from the altar walked readily, spoke freely, heard distinctly, and was able to return home on foot, impressing at every step miraculous footprints, which increased the joy of the exulting company and filled the astonished spectators with joy.

In the following year, 1717, towards the close of the night of the 28th of December, more through a youthful freak than any real necessity at that unusual hour, the cleric Antonio Catelani and Benedict Bonfini, servant of Monsignore John Baptist Puccini, then bishop of that city, were walking on the wall of Cortona; satisfied with the exploit, Catelani had to go off for a moment leaving Bonfini to wait for him. Lulled by fatigue, the latter stretched himself on the ground, and as the night was far advanced fell asleep. Catelani, unconscious of this, returned to the street by a cross-path, expecting to find his companion walking slowly ahead. Not finding him, he called him several times. The cry

awakened Bonfini, still sleepy and misled by the darkness, he missed the way, and advanced to the wall; there the ground suddenly gave way and he fell with great violence on a heap of stones. By this terrible sound, Catelani knew that his companion had fallen. Horror-stricken, he supposed him dashed to pieces by a fall from such a height; the more so, as calling him again and again, he received no answers; disheartened too by such an accident, he burst into tears, not knowing what else to do; at last he began to call him again; and then Bonfini, who, safe and sound, had been looking for his hat, and gone some distance, replied and assured him that that he was entirely unhurt, thanks to Saint Margaret whom he had invoked from his heart in that catastrophe. Catelani wished to have the nearest gate of the city opened at once, but he, ashamed of his nocturnal ramble, the cause of his accident, being known, preferred to roam around the wall, and get in through a breach, which he succeeded in doing with the aid of Catelani who accompanied him home. In the street, but still more in his bed, Bonfini, thinking over his recent danger, was seized with such a tremor, that he was ready to faint with terror; and the better to assure himself of his entire preservation from all harm, which he believed



he had obtained from the miraculous Margaret, he sent for a surgeon early in the morning to examine carefully whether he had received any outward or inward injury ; but the careful scrutiny discovered neither ; and yet the fall was so violent that the stout cloth pantaloons and his stockings were all torn. The prudent physician nevertheless bled him and kept him quiet for two days, after which, feeling his blood calm, and his fear abated, he went to thank his gracious Protectress, and hung up at her altar with a silver *ex voto* all his torn clothes.

On the 14th of February, in the Jubilee year, 1725, Sister Mary Fortunate Vannucci, a lay sister in the convent of St. Jerome at Cortona, commonly called the Poverelle, felt unusually ill. By no means delicate and very laborious, she went on with her work thinking little of herself and the disease. But the disease was not so trifling as she flattered herself, nor so mild as she treated it. It began to grow worse, and to rack her with burning fever, pain in the chest, and a convulsive cough that kept rendering her breathing more and more difficult, and distressing her chest ; so that on the 12th of March she had to give up, and have the doctor called in. The physician, in order to allay the fever, and dispel the painful symptoms, bled her

several times, and used all the remedies which his skill suggested ; but seeing that the disease gained ground, and that the sister was sinking under his very restoratives, he asked to have a consultation with another physician of the city, Doctor Mario Antonio Ciarpallini. On conferring together, they gave her up as hopeless ; there having evidently formed in the lungs a corroding and inflammatory tubercle. To ease her pain and defer death, they adopted every ready expedient. The pain, however, increased not only in the chest, but in the head which ached frantically, giving her no rest, night or day, and a cramp in the arm which prevented her using it. She was so near death that it seemed as though breathing alone had to cease, her extremities being cold and her throat refusing to swallow. The physicians found her in this state on the 4th of April, and advised the last sacraments to be administered. She received Holy Viaticum towards evening from the Father Confessor, who deferred Extreme Unction to the next turn of fever which was expected to be fatal. He accordingly returned to the college at a late hour, convinced that the fever would not set in before the next day ; but it came on at dawn and began with a swoon, followed by a slight delirium ; then her eyes lost their sight and her limbs all motion,

so that she remained stiff and immovable. While they were waiting for her every moment to expire, there arrived at the convent an authentic portion of Margaret's dress sent by Signora Tommasa Tommasi, that they might sign the sister with that relic; it was immediately carried to the dying nun's cell and laid in her breast, while all recited an *Our Father*, a *Hail Mary*, and a *Glory be to the Father*, for her recovery. Almost at the same time she was recommended and signed with Margaret's own crucifix, sent to the monastery for that purpose by Signor Bali Passerini. After receiving this benediction, the patient remained for about a quarter of an hour in a sweet sleep, or rather rapt in a joyful vision; she seemed to be at the grating in the parlor, giving a loaf in alms to a Tertiary of St. Francis, who, seeing her so pallid and emaciated, asked her what her ailing was; she replied that she had a great pain in the breast. On this the Tertiary, extending her hand, said: "Oh! take heart, there is surely nothing the matter, and be well," at these words the dying woman came to herself and found herself indeed as well, with as fresh strength and color, as if she had not suffered any disease. She was able to arise at once from bed, dress without assistance, and go down two pair of stairs and run quickly to the

oratory of her miraculous Healer; there on her knees to sing with the other nuns the accustomed hymn of thanksgiving to the Almighty. While thus engaged, she was beheld and heard by the astonished Confessor, who had hastened to assist her in her last agony; and having heard the account of the prodigy, he rendered new thanks to God, and sent the resuscitated sister to the parlor to console her grieving mother, who was there with sobs and tears awaiting the announcement of her departure; when instead of this she beheld with her own eyes her daughter restored to life, the position of the two had well nigh changed, for she almost died of pure joy.

These three prodigies, together with the miraculous incorruption of her most beautiful body, were approved by the Sovereign Pontiff before Margaret's canonization. I take pleasure in adding two others still more recent, of which I have just received the joyful intelligence. On the 23d of July, 1738, the Canon Brunone Bruni, after assisting at vespers in his collegiate church of Saint John in Perticeto, feeling suddenly very strange, was already on his way to an apothecary's where he hoped to find a physician, but a violent stroke of apoplexy arrested and prostrated him in the middle of the square, deprived

of breath, sense, and motion. Persons who were passing immediately ran up, and to have him attended at once, carried him to the very apothecary. Here all the usual liniments and spirits were applied, but he did not recover or improve a jot. Meanwhile the Archpriest Rubini arrived, and being aware of his great devotion to Saint Margaret, took a picture of the Saint, blessed him, and applied it to his head; he at once recovered his senses, his tongue was loosed, his limbs relaxed, he rose and found himself entirely intact except in one of his toes which had been injured in the fall. To cure this the surgeons compelled him to go to bed; but when quiet and embrocations failed to heal it, they resorted to the lancet. Tired of this long treatment, and full of confidence in his Saint, he one day took off all the liniments, and blessed the part with a piece of Margaret's dress, in which without other bandage he tied it up. The next morning feeling no pain, he examined it carefully, and found it not only well, but without the slightest sign of all the incisions made with the lancet. In gratitude to so lavish a Benefactress, he not only paid his private homage, but established a numerous public Sodality of Ecclesiastics and lay persons, devout clients of Margaret, and fervent imitators of her charity to the

sick poor ; caring for them at their own expense, and comforting them in their agony by their assistance.

Last year (1745), a venerable missionary priest of the Propaganda, who had returned from Peru, in America, to Rome, attested by repeated depositions, that one clear day, while his devout companion was giving in one of those churches the novena preceding the Feast of Saint Margaret, in the month of February, she appeared at the church door in her usual Tertiary habit, and before every eye, passed through the crowd of people, addressed the priest, thanked him for his zeal for her glory, and promised to correspond to it. The novelty of the habit, the loveliness of her countenance, the sweetness of her voice, filled the people with admiration and love, and so enkindled such devotion to Margaret, that they venerated no saint so much, nor invoked any to more purpose. Thus Margaret, not less to Indian than to European, by the wonderful graces which she obtains for all, exclaims constantly with her Jesus : " Come to me all ye that labor and are heavy burthened, and I will refresh you."

## CHAPTER VIII.

CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY OF THE DEVOTION  
PAID TO MARGARET.

THE universal public veneration of Margaret began at Cortona as soon as she closed her mortal career, when, according to the promise made her by her Jesus, when she breathed forth her soul, she also blew from the hearts of her scoffers all envy and contempt, changed now by God in his mercy to credit and love. Her very detractors commended her virtues, exalted her merits, sought her relics, revered her remains, and joined with the rest in surrounding her funeral with the pomp which we have elsewhere described, the noble cortege, the countless torches, and strove to immortalize her body by fragrant balsams: to perpetuate her name by the sumptuous erection of that new and august temple, commenced in the very year of Margaret's death, as is proven by the ancient stone tablet set now in the outer wall of the exterior portico of that church, and cut as follows:

“ A. D. MCCLXXXVII.

TEMPORE D. FRANCISCI PRIORIS  
CONSULUM COMMUNIS CORTONÆ

INCEPTA FUIT ECCLESIA ”

Nine years after, that is in 1306, Hildebrand, Bishop of Arezzo, wishing to restore and embellish the oratory of Saint Basil, granted an indulgence of forty days to all who contributed their alms, and used in his edict these words: "Where reposes the body of Blessed Margaret, through whose merits many miracles have been wrought there." Peter, Bishop of Chiusi, published a like edict to his diocesans, giving Margaret the title not of *Blessed* merely, but of Saint, in these terms: "Almighty God, by the merits of this Saint, enlightens the blind, restores hearing to the deaf, and moreover raised to life a dead child about to be interred."

More authoritative honors were paid to Margaret about the same time by Cardinal Napoleon Orsini, Legate of the Holy See. He approved her life, written by Father Giunta Bevignati, authenticated the miracles, confirmed her title of Blessed, and increased her devotion by many indulgences; and finally in 1318, persuaded Isnard, Patriarch of Antioch, and eleven other bishops, to grant each forty days' indulgence to all who visited her tomb or gave alms towards it.

Ten years after, in 1328, when Cortona was restored to her pristine honor as an episcopal see, Ranieri Ubertini, the new bishop, ratified



Margaret's title of Blessed, as well as all the indulgences. As by this means the pilgrims and donations to the venerated sepulchre were multiplied, so that the magnificent structure of the new church was at last completed. Although dedicated to Saint Basil and Saint Margaret, it has always borne simply the name of our Saint. This temple of Almighty God was opened in 1392, under Pope Boniface VIII, who granted many indulgences, which Pope Eugene IV confirmed and increased, when by his bull he approved the cession of the church and oratory made by the Cortonese to the Observantine Friars Minor. In this bull the Sovereign Pontiff gives this high attestation of Margaret's miracles, and the devotion to her: "As the miracles increased, which Almighty God, by the merits of the same Blessed Margaret, has long since deigned to work, and continues to work, this oratory has become renowned for the continual pilgrimages and the devotion of the faithful."

But it became still more celebrated in subsequent years, when the church was better served and attended by those holy religious. By their fervent appeals, their efficacious supplications, they better disposed the crowds of pilgrims to receive graces from Margaret, and obliged Margaret to grant them, so that, the prodigies in-

creasing, veneration also increased. The illustrious client of Margaret, the Sovereign Pontiff Leo X, attests in his bull, that the Feast of Saint Margaret was celebrated in that church by an ever increasing concourse of the faithful on the anniversary of her blessed death. To promote it still more, he granted for that Feast an indulgence of two hundred years, and as many quarantines, and in the following year, 1516, granted a plenary indulgence; and by a special indult permitted in that church the celebration of the mass and recitation of the office of a saint, neither virgin nor martyr. These concessions were made no less from his own loving reverence to Margaret, than from his condescension to the pious Cortonese nobleman, Silvio Passerini, then Archpriest of the Cathedral of Cortona, and Datary of his Holiness, but subsequent Cardinal.

The Cortonese never spared any endeavor to give greater solemnity to each returning anniversary. Not only is Margaret styled, in the ancient public statutes of that noble city, their beloved Protectress, but many orders are to be found issued for the celebration of her annual Feast, and among others, that the tribunals should be closed every year for three days, that is the eve and the morrow of the 22d of February. Moreover, that for the better preservation

and honor of her incorrupt body, it should be shown only on her Feast, or some other urgent public necessity, or private devotion of illustrious and noble personages. This decree is still in full observance, with the sole advantageous exception, that the sacred body is shown also on Sunday after Ascension, when they annually celebrate with great pomp her solemn translation. The keys of the shrine are kept by the Supreme Council, and one of the public magistrates is always present at its opening.

The indult, conceding a proper mass and office on the anniversary of Margaret, was in 1623 extended to the whole Franciscan Order, by the Pontiff Urban VIII, himself a special client of Margaret. Four years after, the Cortonese, ever anxious for the honor of their Saint, addressed a fervent appeal to the same Pope, soliciting the institution of a process, according to the new form prescribed by him for solemn canonizations, and the Pontiff assigned Cardinal Mellini as postulator of the cause. On his death, Cardinal Sacchetti was substituted on the 2d of March, 1641. As he died four years after, Cardinal Costaguti was appointed on the 4th of July, and he was succeeded by Cardinal d'Este and Cardinal Aldobrandini. In 1706, Clement XI assigned the prosecution of the cause to the pious

Cardinal Gabrielli, who, at the instance of the Conventual Franciscans, obtained for them on the 9th of May, 1711, from the Sacred Congregation of Rites, the proper prayer and lessons of the office of Blessed Margaret. This indult was extended on the 2d of July, 1712, to all the friars and nuns of the Observance. Cardinal Gabrielli, having died in the meanwhile, was succeeded the last mentioned year by Cardinal Casini, of the Order of Capuchins, then recently promoted to the purple in consequence of his great merit. Three years after, that is on the 11th of May, 1715, he finally obtained of the Sacred Congregation, that on the anniversary of Margaret's death, this eulogium of her should be inserted in the Roman Martyrology: "At Cortona, in Tuscany, Blessed Margaret of the third Order of Saint Francis, whose body wonderfully incorrupt for four centuries and more, diffusing a sweet odor, and illustrious for frequent miracles, is there revered with great honor." For this he deserves indeed an eternal encomium from me in these pages, if my pen could express what his merits deserve; as they are expressed in the three volumes of his admired apostolic sermons, which place in a noble view no less the virtues preached than the eminent preacher. Every encomium would indeed be less glorious than his simple title of Cardinal Casini.

This pious and illustrious Cardinal was succeeded on the 28th of January, 1720, by one no less so, his Eminence, Pietro Marcellino Corradini, who, most grateful for special benefits received from Margaret, erected many altars, founded more chapels, and instituted feasts in her honor, and also visited her tomb, authenticated the relics, examined the miracles, and so promoted the solemn Canonization, that he at last obtained it from the Supreme Pontiff, Benedict XIII, who had been chosen by God to exalt Margaret on the altars, and to be exalted by her, first on earth, to the honors of the purple, to which he was named on the Feast of Saint Margaret, February 22, 1672, and to the Pontifical throne, to which he was raised on the Feast of her translation, May 29th, 1724, and secondly to heaven, to which he soared, closing his life at the close of first vespers of her solemn festival, February 21, 1730. This holy Pontiff then, on the 23d of December, 1727, after hearing the Consultors of the Rites and the eminent Cardinals, and on the 27th (Feast of Saint John the Evangelist, Margaret's beloved protector), approved several miracles; finally, on the 22d of February, 1728, pronounced the great decree of her Canonization.

The news of this long desired decree reached

Cortona by express, late at night, and Signor Onofrio Buoni, public deputy for that cause, which he had promoted with no less zeal than expense, wished to anticipate the joy of his fellow-citizens by making it known by the festive sounds of all the bells. All at once understood the meaning, and every heart exulting, poured forth most fervent thanks to God. Not content with this private thanksgiving, they renewed it solemnly in the morning with a mass and the *Te Deum*, chanted in the church of their beloved Saint, for whose greater honor the whole city was illuminated for three successive nights. To fill up their cup of joy, there was needed now only the fulfilment of the honors then decreed to the Saint; hence, impatient of delay, they besought his Holiness to issue with all possible celerity the public act of solemn Canonization, and he, to solemnize it better, resolved to perform on the first great solemnity, Whitsunday, which fell that year on the 16th of May, on which day it was in the most solemn manner executed with the usual pomp, in the Basilica of Saint Peter's, as described in the two previous editions of this book.

This was followed by the solemnization of a Triduum in the Church of the Holy Apostles of the Conventual Friars, and of an Octave by

the Observantine Fathers in Ara Cæli, the front of the church being covered by a most beautiful facade of canvass put up on a network of beams for the occasion. In Cortona, the honors paid her by the people exceeded all ideas, for they equalled their unrivalled devotion to the Saint. All persons of rank and distinction in the neighboring cities, and in all Tuscany, flocked to Cortona, where artists of the highest merit, musicians instrumental and vocal, hastened, and the most renowned oratory came in answer to the invitations of the Cortonese.

Even these holidays did not check the desire of the people to honor their beloved Saint; they could not indeed obtain of the Holy See any higher title, but they could more ample honors; and these they solicited in every way, using with Clement XII, the mediation of many bishops and princes, that his Holiness might extend to all Italy the proper office and mass granted to the whole Seraphic Order for her Feast, the 22d of February. This the Sovereign Pontiff granted by his rescript of May 11th, 1736. Having enlarged the office, they determined to extend also the church, by adding two magnificent chapels, increasing its splendor by greater perpetual lamps around the tomb, and adding new ornaments to the beautiful shrine God concurred

in this by the following multiplications. In the month of August, 1744, the Canon, Philip Angeliere Alticozio, Purveyor General of the Sodality of St. Margaret, gave Joseph Giovacchi, coppersmith in Cortona, twenty-seven pounds of brass to be worked into sheets, and fitted in the form of wings to one of the bronze animals which support the shrine. When he had finished his work it was found to weigh more than before, in spite of the working and the loss by fire. By a similar result did God reward the zeal of Father Joseph Anthony Gardi, Warden of the Conventual Friars at Imola. That Father had wished to celebrate Margaret's Feast in his church with greater pomp, but the wax candles hired at various shops, though burned for more than three hours, never lost an ounce, but went back to the owners heavier than they came.

Quicker than the sumptuous labor of the shrine, the splendid design of which required a long time to complete, could they give that venerated body the garb which had pleased her more than aught else here on earth, and which on her death the magnificent devotion of the past generations of Cortonese had removed. Hence in 1744, they resolved to attire her in a new habit, exactly like that used by her in life: accordingly by closely



observing the ancient pictures of the Saint, and considering the identical relics of her habit, they made one of the same kind and form, that is a gray cloak, and a dress of a dusky white ground with gray stripes. But of all these honors paid to their beloved Saint, the most glorious to her, the most advantageous to the world, has been the increase of the ancient Sodality, already erected in Cortona, under Margaret's auspices, and of which I here subjoin a separate notice.

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## CHAPTER IX.

### THE SODALITY OF SAINT MARGARET AT CORTONA.

As early as 1660, some pious gentlemen of Cortona, aspiring to imitate the contrition and penance of their contrite Penitent, and to obtain it of God, united to obtain her own powerful mediation: placing their association under her protection, and calling it, after her, the Sodality of penance and contrition of Saint Margaret; and having obtained the Apostolic approbation of the Sovereign Pontiff, Alexander VII., these devout gentlemen frequently met to offer their prayers for their holy intention to their great Patroness and titular Saint; and she so heard them, that Cortona had more than once the pleasure

of seeing those who had been a scandal, become by penance the ornament of the city. The zealous gentlemen, desirous of not enjoying so striking an advantage alone, wished to extend their fortunate Sodality to the world, and having applied to the vigilant Pontiff Benedict XIV, in 1741, they not only obtained his approbation, but a greater aid of spiritual treasures which attracted even the most indifferant. He confirmed and extended the following indulgences to all the sodalists of both sexes, viz: a plenary indulgence on the day of their entering the Sodality, after confession and communion, and on the same conditions a like plenary indulgence in *articulo mortis*, on their invoking (at least contritely in heart, if unable to speak) the sacred names of Jesus and Mary. A plenary indulgence on the Feast of Saint Margaret, Easter, and Whitsunday. On the nativity of Saint John the Baptist, and the Feast of Saint Matthew, seven years and as many quarantines on receiving the holy sacraments, and visiting on the day the church of St. Margaret in Cortona, or out of Cortona any church of the order of Saint Francis, if any, and if none any church at option. Moreover, every time they do any work of Christian charity, sixty days' indulgence, all which indulgences the sodalists may apply to the souls in Purgatory.

The zealous gentlemen have enriched their Sodality with other estimable spiritual treasures, that is, filiation with the most estimable orders in the Catholic world, having obtained from the Generals of these religious orders that whoever becomes a Brother or Sister of the Sodality of Saint Margaret, becomes also a Brother or Sister of that order, and enjoys all the advantages usually gained by such filiations and brotherhoods. These advantages are reduced by theologians to four heads, as may be seen in Suarez\* and Gobat.† These are, first, the receiving special benefits from God, through the merits of that order to which God, being attached, cannot but love specially all connected with it; it being the part of true friendship to render all the friends of the beloved amiable to the lover. Thus for chaste Joseph's sake the house of Potiphar was blessed and Pharaoh's kingdom prospered. The second is to derive special assistance from the public and private prayers of those religious, theologians teaching, unanimously, that the prayers of others aid us more effectually as they are more attached to, or connected with the suppliant. The third is to participate plentifully in the satisfaction of the acts of mortification of these religious, so that Divine

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\*Tom. 4. in 3. part. disp. 55. sect. 5.

†Tract. 4. de Indulg. part 1. cap. 12.

Justice, satisfied thereby, pardons us the scourges deserved by our sins; hence the more penitent an order is, and the less delinquent its members, the more redundant satisfaction is communicated to the confraters. The fourth is the obtaining the ample indulgences granted by the Sovereign Pontiffs to all who are admitted by the superiors of those orders to share in their good works. Urban V gave permission to the Generals and Provincials of the Seraphic Order to communicate to all their friends all the indulgences of their order; and many theologians maintain that this faculty was not taken away by the bull of Pope Paul V. But even if it was, it is certain that every religious order has had many plenary and daily indulgences bestowed upon it, which are gained by its religious, and are enjoyed by suffrage by souls most united to them.

Hence the Brothers and Sisters participate in life and after death, by virtue of filiation and aggregation made to the Sodality, in all the good works: that is, offices, masses, communions, fasts, watches, sermons, missions, spiritual exercises, penitences, abstinences, disciplines, alms, hospitality, mental and vocal prayer, labors and the rest, made and practised by God's grace in the following orders: Benedictines of Monte Cassino, Basilians, Augustinians, including the Barefooted, and those of the Congregation of

Lombardy, Camaldolese, Hermits of the Congregation of Tuscany, those of the city, the Monks of Vallumbrosa, Reformed Cistercians, Monks of La Trappe, Trinitarians, Observantines, Reformed Franciscans, Recollects of France, Alcantarines, and all other Reformed Minors, living under the obedience of the Minister General of the Order of Saint Francis, Conventuals, Dominicans, Servites of Mary, Silvestrines, Celestines, Olivetans, Hieronymites of Blessed Peter of Pisa, Theatines, Barnabites, Capuchins, Carmelites of the Congregation of Mantua, Theresians, both of Italy and Spain, two distinct orders, Buonfratelli of St. John of God, Clerks Minor of the pious Schools, Canons Regular of Lateran, Lazarists, Minims, Fathers of the Society of Jesus, Carthusians, Ministers of the Sick, and of the whole Order of the Visitation, who, with the Fathers of the Society of Jesus, have been in perpetuity aggregated to the Sodality of St. Margaret.

Of these orders, the Augustinians, Trappists, and Celestines celebrate annually a special mass, and make special suffrages for the official brethren of the Sodality on their death. To these suffrages gratuitously made by these religious, are added those obligatory every year on each sodalist, the rules requiring each one to have a mass celebrated every year for the deceased members, and to this mass, at whatever altar offered, Bene-

dict XIV granted the indult of a privileged altar, and the deliverance of a soul from Purgatory. If any one through his poverty cannot have this mass said, he must, in lieu thereof, confess, receive, and recite the whole rosary of fifteen decades, to which communion and rosary the same Sovereign Pontiff granted a special plenary indulgence, so that every deceased member obtains every year the suffrages of as many masses and plenary indulgences, as there are living members; and at the present time the number enrolled throughout the world is very great, including also monarchs and sovereigns. Hence it seemed proper to the same Supreme Pontiff, Benedict XIV, to exalt it still more by this decree: "The Sacred Congregation of Indulgences and Sacred Rites on the 5th of February, 1748, ordained that the Sodality of Saint Margaret of Cortona should be erected into an archconfraternity, with power to aggregate other confraternities erected under the same title, and of communicating to them the indulgences granted to it by the briefs alleged; a report whereof having been made by me, the undersigned, to our most Holy Father on the 2nd of March, his Holiness approving the act of the Sacred Congregation, granted the said erection, to be promulgated however in a special brief.

THE END.

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